

10.2 Proposed District Plan Change No.4 – Urban Growth – Approval to notify proposed amendments to the South Waikato District Plan

Report To:	Council
Meeting Date:	Wednesday, 30 July 2025
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Purpose

This report presents the final draft of the contents of a proposed change to the South Waikato District Plan under the Resource Management Act 1991 (the RMA), to provide for additional residential, commercial and industrial land in Tirau, Putāruru and Tokoroa townships. It also seeks to ensure that future urban areas zones are identified to provide the required flexibility to bring new development online as required.

Formal approval is sought from Council, subject to obtaining the necessary recommendations on the attached documents from the Raukawa Settlement Trust under the Upper River Act 2010 and RMA Schedule 1, Clause 4A. The necessary approval from the Te Arawa River Iwi Trust (TARIT) under the Upper River Act has been obtained.

Recommendation

That the Council:

- a. Receives the report 'Proposed District Plan Change No.4 – Urban Growth (Resolve #2025-272) – Approval to notify proposed amendments to the South Waikato District Plan',
- b. Approves the following documents for public notification under clause 5(1)(b) of the First Schedule to the Resource Management Act 1991 and Section 168A of that Act:
 - i. Proposed Change No.4 to the South Waikato District Plan under the Resource Management Act 1991 - Urban Growth (attachments 1-20).
 - ii. Section 32 Report on Proposed Change No.4 and Attachments (attachment 21)
- c. Notes that this approval is conditional on the receipt of an approval to notify from the Raukawa Settlement Trust.
- d. Authorises the Chief Executive to make any minor technical amendments to the attached documents for the purpose of finalising the provisions and the section 32 evaluation document.
- e. Authorises the Chief Executive to apply to the appropriate Minister for an exemption, as necessary, from any forthcoming legislative requirement limiting the ability of territorial authorities to initiate changes to district plans under the RMA.

Executive Summary

This report presents the final draft of the contents of a proposed change to the South Waikato District Plan under the Resource Management Act 1991 (the RMA), to provide for additional residential, commercial and industrial land in Tirau, Putāruru and Tokoroa townships. It also seeks to ensure that future urban areas zones are identified to provide the required flexibility to bring new development online as required.

Context

Recent Ministerial Announcement

On 16 July 2025, the Minister for RM Reform, Hon. Chris Bishop, announced that the Government intends to change the current Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Bill to place a moratorium on Councils undertaking reviews and other changes to regional and district plans. This is to enable local authorities to prepare for the new resource management system that is due to replace the RMA next year. It appears from the announcement that PC4 would likely be exempt from the moratorium, as it helps to implement the Government's 'Going for Housing Growth' initiative. However, it may be necessary to apply to the Minister for that exemption. Accordingly, it is considered prudent for Council to authorise the Chief Executive to apply for an exemption, should this be required.

Discussion

Following extensive community consultation on the South Waikato District 'Growth Plan 2024-2054 Our People / Our Place' which was adopted by Council in February 2024, PC4 is a refinement of the findings of this document. PC4 will provide the necessary zoning changes to enable establish the new 'live zoned' growth cells and future urban zones. In summary, PC4 provides:

- Seven new 'live zoned' growth cells - one residential growth cell in Putaruru, three in Tirau and two in Tokoroa and one industrial growth cell in Tokoroa.
- Six future urban zones (FUZs) – one residential future urban zone FUZ in Putaruru, one in Tirau, two in Tokoroa, one commercial future urban zone FUZ in Putaruru, and one industrial future urban zone FUZ in Tirau.
- A supporting chapter with objectives policies and rules for the new future urban zone.
- Four smaller areas of rezoning to enable appropriate development to continue occur.
- New urban form and development objectives and policies to support the development and intensification of our urban areas.
- Strengthened natural hazard measures.
- A relaxation of residential subdivision provisions and supporting provisions for the new growth cells.
- Changes to the general residential zone to better support intensification, including new housing typologies and a relaxation of certain standards including building coverage and outdoor living space.
- New provisions in the town centre zone to better support new residential activities.

By statute, an evaluation must accompany a plan change, to explain how the proposed changes meet the 'efficiency and effectiveness' tests in section 32 of the RMA. The necessary draft evaluation is appended to this report (Appendix 21) and is being presented for Council endorsement. It must be made available to the public when PC4 is publicly notified.

Council will note that there are some highlights to enable cross referencing of final rule numbers in the plan change documents, and that areas of the section 32 document that are incomplete. Approval is sought to enable staff to make any minor technical amendments to the attached documents for the purpose of finalising the provisions. The Section 32 document is supporting evaluation documentation only that is subservient to the plan change itself. Its purpose is largely to ensure the provisions are efficient and effective. The changes required are tidy ups and finalising information and this does not impact the provisions in the plan that we are proposing to amend.

As part of the development of the Plan Change staff identified the likely infrastructure costs associated with each new zone and have costed these. Under its 'Going for Housing Growth' proposal Government has signalled new tools for Councils to ensure developers pay a proportionate share of the total costs of infrastructure required for growth. The replacement of the Development Contribution system with a Levy system has also been announced. Staff will continue to monitor more detailed announcement to ensure appropriate mechanisms are put in place to ensure growth costs are recouped from developers.

Plan Change Contents

The changes proposed to the chapters are enclosed as Attachments 1-19. A summary of the draft Proposed Plan Change is enclosed as Attachment 20. The Section 32 Analysis is included as Attachment 21.

Approval to Notify from Waikato River Iwi (Raukawa and Te Arawa River Iwi)

Under Section 18 of the Upper River Act and Clause 7.6 of the Joint Management Agreements (JMA) with the Raukawa Settlement Trust and the Te Arawa River Iwi Trust (TARIT), a recommendation from the Co-Governance Committee established with each Trust is required before Council initiates any amendment to the district plan that relates to the Vision and Strategy for the Waikato River. All three of the proposed Tokoroa urban growth cells and two of the Putaruru residential growth cell and future urban zones are within the Waikato River catchment. The Tirau re-zonings of course are located within the Te Waihou catchment instead.

There has been ongoing engagement over a period of time with both Iwi. TARIT has formally approved PC4 for notification. Raukawa approval is being sought directly from the Trust Board, at a meeting currently being scheduled. Please note that this plan change is not located within the rohe of Ngati Koroki Kahukura and Ngati Haua, but both Iwi are aware of the proposal.

Options

Option 1 Do Nothing

This will not achieve Council's strategic objectives and will limit growth throughout the district.

Option 2 Notify Plan Change

This will give effect to the District Growth Strategy by providing zoned land for industrial growth and housing and facilitating economic development.

Option 2 is the recommended option

Linkage to Strategic Plan Priorities

The Plan directly gives effect to the District Growth Strategy 'Growth Plan 2024-2054 Our People / Our Place' adopted in February 2024, subject to some amendments.

It also relates directly to the key goals of increasing growth in GDP at a higher rate than the rest of the Country and increasing rates of home ownership.

Consultation (Internal and External)

The Growth Strategy 'Growth Plan 2024-2054 Our People / Our Place' which forms the basis of the plan change was formally consulted on in 2023. Since then, all landowners effected have been

contacted and zoning intentions discussed. JMA partners have been consulted throughout the process as required by the respective agreements.

The notification of the Plan Change itself will involve a letter to all ratepayers in the district to satisfy the requirements of Schedule 1 of the RMA. A communications plan has developed to ensure that there is public awareness of the Plan Change and that those who wish to participate in the process are able to.

Financial Considerations

Sufficient Budget was provided in the 2024-2034 LTP allow the development of the Plan Change and for the submissions and hearing process.

Risks

There is some risk that forthcoming legislative amendments may cause the Plan Change to be withdrawn however staff are confident that an exemption can be obtained if necessary.

Significance & Engagement Policy

Having considered the Significance and Engagement Policy, staff have assessed that the decisions sought in this report have high significance, and the engagement process is determined by the Resource Management Act (Schedule 1).

Reference

Attachments

1. Attachment 1 - PC4 Chapter 3 Interpretation tracked changes
2. Attachment 2 - PC4 Chapter 6 Matters of Strategic Direction tracked changes
3. Attachment 3 - PC4 Chapter 7.2 Infrastructure Chapter tracked changes
4. Attachment 4 - PC4 Chapter 7.3 Transport Chapter tracked changes
5. Attachment 5 - PC4 Chapter 8.2 Hazardous Substances Chapter tracked changes
6. Attachment 6 - PC4 Chapter 8.3 Natural Hazards Chapter tracked changes
7. Attachment 7 - PC4 Chapter 10.2 Natural Character Chapter tracked changes
8. Attachment 8 - PC4 Chapter 11 Subdivision tracked changes
9. Attachment 9 - PC4 Chapter 12.1 All Activities tracked changes
10. Attachment 10 - PC4 Chapter 12.3 Air Emissions tracked changes
11. Attachment 11 - PC4 Chapter 12.4 Earthworks tracked changes
12. Attachment 12 - PC4 Chapter 12.7 Noise tracked changes
13. Attachment 13 - PC4 Chapter 12.8 Signs tracked changes
14. Attachment 14 - PC4 Chapter 13.1 General Residential Zone tracked changes
15. Attachment 15 - PC4 Chapter 13.5 Town Centre Zone tracked changes
16. Attachment 16 - PC4 Chapter 13.7 General Industrial Zone tracked changes
17. Attachment 17 - PC4 Future Urban Zone tracked changes
18. Attachment 18 - Chapters 16-19 Development Area Plans
19. Attachment 19 - PC4 APP4 Information Requirements tracked changes

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20. Attachment 20 - PC4 - Summary of Amendments
 21. Appendix 21 Plan Change 4 - Section 32 report and attachments (full doc)