



**November  
2025**



## **Proposed Plan Change 120 Information Sheet #8 Natural Hazards**

**From 3 November to 19 December 2025, Auckland Council invites submissions on Proposed Plan Change 120: Housing Intensification and Resilience (PC120) - a change to the Auckland Unitary Plan (AUP) (our city's planning rulebook) that proposes to rezone areas of residential land for greater intensification, to enable greater building heights and densities in many parts of urban Auckland, and to strengthen management of natural hazard risks.**

**Submissions are now open until 5pm on Friday 19 December 2025.**

**This information sheet explains proposed changes to strengthen the management of natural hazard risks. For information on how to find flood and coastal hazard information in Geomaps, refer to Information Sheet #23 Flooding Information in Geomaps and Information Sheet #24 Coastal Hazard Information in Geomaps.**

### **Background to Proposed Plan Change 120**

PC78 was Auckland's former intensification plan change as required by the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020 (NPS-UD). It incorporated the Medium Density Residential Standards (MDRS) which was legally required at the time. This generally allowed three dwellings of up to three storeys to be built on most residential sites without resource consent.

In August 2025, the government amended the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) which enabled PC78 to be withdrawn. Auckland Council withdrew PC78 (in part) and notified PC120 to improve Auckland's resilience to natural hazards and focus intensification around centres and transport nodes.

**PC78 was withdrawn in part from 5pm on 9 October 2025, and included withdrawal of the MDRS in PC78.**

PC120 addresses central government requirements to:

- contribute to the same level of housing capacity in the AUP as was to be enabled by PC78
- enable building heights and densities within and around town and local centres which reflect the level of commercial and community activity these centres offer
- enable building heights of at least 6-storeys within walkable catchments from the edge of the city centre zone, the edge of metropolitan centre zones and around existing and planned rapid transit stops (train and busway stations) and
- enable building heights of at least 10- and 15- storeys around certain train stations listed in the RMA.

These heights and densities must be enabled unless a ‘qualifying matter’ applies to a site (see Information Sheet #13) which makes that level of development inappropriate.

PC120 also strengthens provisions that manage natural hazard risks. Areas potentially affected by flooding, land instability, coastal erosion or coastal inundation now and in the future are targeted with stronger rules and other planning measures. This approach is to improve Auckland’s resilience to severe weather events and natural hazards, following the storms in early 2023 which resulted in widespread flooding, landslips, and coastal inundation across the region.

## Key Changes to Natural Hazard Provisions

PC120 introduces a new risk management framework to better respond to the level of risk associated with natural hazards. The council developed stronger AUP rules and policies based on the *likelihood* of natural hazards and their *consequences*.

The strengthened provisions proposed within PC120 aim to:

- *Existing use and development* - reduce natural hazard risk over time to a tolerable or acceptable level
- *New subdivision, use and development* – avoid significant natural hazard risk, and enable new subdivision, uses and development only where risk is tolerable or acceptable
- *All subdivision, use and development* - avoid creating or worsening natural hazard risks on other properties, infrastructure or the environment
- *Māori Land, Treaty Settlement Land, marae, urupā and mana whenua cultural heritage values* – reduce natural hazard risk over time and not be worsened by subdivision, use and development
- *Infrastructure* - manage infrastructure where it has a functional or operational need to locate within areas subject to natural hazards
- *Natural features, buffers and solutions* – manage risk from natural hazard using natural features in preference to hard protection structures
- *Flood plains, flood prone areas and overland flow paths* – maintain their functions in conveying stormwater runoff and flood waters

- Consider potential long term effects of climate change
- Adopt a precautionary approach

## How has Council differentiated risks?

The council developed risk levels of *acceptable*, *tolerable*, or *significant* using feedback from community consultation.



Different outcomes are sought depending on the level of risk. The greater the risk, the more stringent the controls. For example, the general policy direction is to avoid new development where there is 'significant' risk.

The council must use the most up to date information when assessing risks from natural hazards. International and national improvements in natural hazards data means that we can now better predict natural hazards and their impacts.

### Determining Risk Categories – Flooding and Coastal Hazards

For flooding, coastal inundation and coastal erosion, default hazard risk categories are determined using the following three factors:



The combination of these three factors then determines the default risk classification and what the corresponding policy direction is. Different policies can apply depending on the hazard and type of activity.

## Determining Risk Categories – Landslides

For landslides, hazard risk categories rely on the same three factors as above, except these are used in new assessment methodology (Appendix 24 Landslide hazard risk assessment methodology) that determines what the associated risk category is.

## What Changes to Natural Hazard Provisions are Proposed?

In addition to the new risk management framework, PC120 proposes a number of other changes relating to natural hazard risk management as set out below:

- **New rules**

The council proposes new rules in the chapter of the AUP dealing with natural hazards. Chapter E36 changes what the council will consider in resource consent applications. For example, how natural hazard potential consequences are assessed, and mitigation measures proposed to manage risks.

- **New mapping**

PC120 uses updated planning methods to identify areas that are subject to natural hazards.

- **Changes in residential zoning**

More information about reducing exposure to risk through zoning is explained later in this information sheet.

- **Cultural impacts**

Proposed changes strengthened consideration of the risks from natural hazards on Māori values, rights and interests.

- **Consistency**

Most changes are made to Chapter E36, but the council proposes other changes elsewhere in the AUP for alignment.

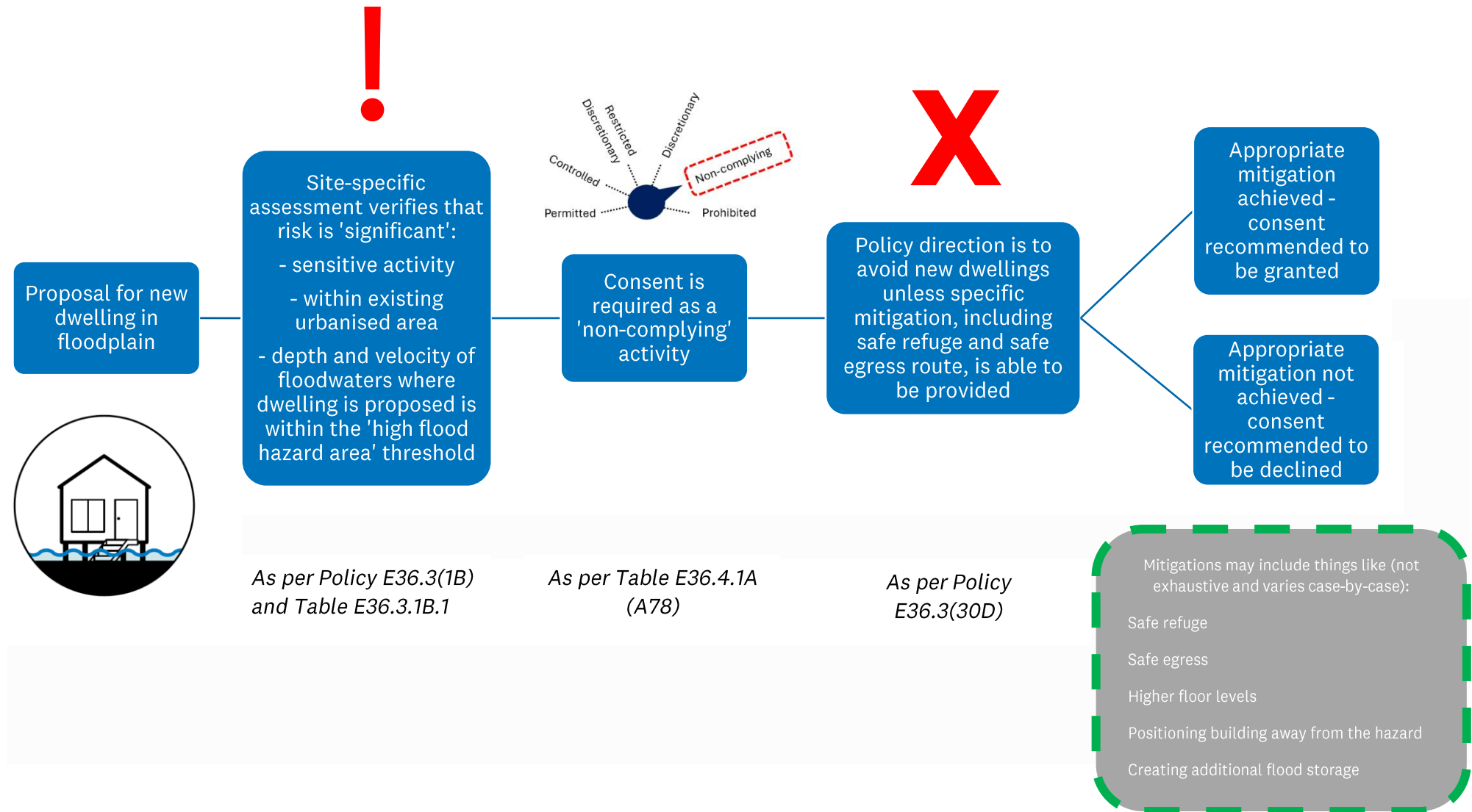
Some definitions, text, and information layers within the AUP relating to natural hazards need to be updated to ensure that the hazards are appropriately managed into the future. Applying the latest information is complementary to the strengthened approach to natural hazard risk the council is proposing through PC120.

For an example of how these provisions would apply and the assessment that would be carried out, please see below.

## Assessment process

The overall assessment process is largely similar to that under the operative AUP.

Sites that are subject to natural hazards are required to provide a site-specific hazard risk assessment to understand the hazard on site and assess the risk associated with any proposed development, including any mitigation, against the relevant policies. The example below shows how a development in a floodplain would be assessed under the proposed PC120 process.



## Significant Natural Hazards as a Qualifying Matter

The council proposes significant natural hazards are a qualifying matter where the intensity of development is less in PC120 than otherwise required by the NPS-UD or RMA.

For more information on what qualifying matters are and how they are applied through PC120, please refer to information sheet #13 Qualifying Matters.

## Zoning Approach to Natural Hazards

PC120 proposes to apply the Residential – Single house zone (SH) to residential properties that are exposed to the highest level of flooding and coastal hazard risk. The SH Zone allows less intensification than other residential zones, so the use of this zone creates less exposure to life and property from natural hazard risk.

Some properties are proposed to be re-zoned from the higher intensity Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings Zone to the medium density Mixed Housing Urban Zone for the same reason.

## Natural Hazard rules apply from 3 November 2025

Proposed natural hazard rules, and re-zoning for natural hazard reasons, in PC120 apply from 3 November 2025. The RMA allows natural hazard rules to have immediate legal effect from their notification in a plan change. People can still make a submission on these rules and re-zoning proposals as part of PC120.

The council identifies the proposed Single House and Mixed Housing Urban zoning that has immediate legal effect in the PC120 viewer, where this is proposed to manage natural hazard risk.

For more information on how to use the PC120 map viewer, refer to the PC120 Map Viewer ‘How-to’ Video.

Natural hazard rules that apply straight away are identified in the AUP and PC120.

## Further information

- For detailed information about the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020 (NPS-UD) [visit the Ministry for the Environment website.](#)
- For more information on the amendments to the RMA [visit the Ministry for the Environment website.](#)



**Please note:**

**This information sheet is a summary document to assist with understanding Proposed Plan Change 120 – Housing Intensification and Resilience, which gives effect to Policies 3 and 4 of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020 and addresses the requirements of Schedule 3C of the Resource Management Act 1991.**

Proposed Plan Change 120 to the Auckland Unitary Plan was publicly notified by Auckland Council on 3 November 2025.

All information provided in this information sheet should be considered as being illustrative and indicative only. Users should take specific advice from qualified professional people before undertaking any action as a result of information obtained from this information sheet. The user waives and releases Auckland Council from any claims arising from use of the information provided in this information sheet.