Te Aroturukitanga o te Mahere ā-Wae
ki Tāmaki Makaurau

Auckland Unitary Plan Section 35 Monitoring

B3.4 Energy

Summary Report
August 2025

Contents

Overview

Climate change is an important issue for Auckland, with Auckland Council declaring a climate change emergency in 2019, prior to the adoption of the city's Te Tāruke-ā-Tāwhiri: Auckland's Climate Plan 2020. Increasing renewable electricity generation[1] is closely intertwined with the city's response to climate change and efforts to transition to a low emissions economy and city by 2050 or sooner.

Most of Auckland's electricity is sourced from outside the city boundaries. Any disruption in supply, or problems with the infrastructure required to deliver electricity, is a significant issue given the city's reliance on electricity. Increasing renewable electricity generation activities and energy efficiency and conservation reduces greenhouse gas emissions and energy demand, and the need for the use of fossil fuels.

The development of renewable electricity generation can cause adverse effects in relation to amenity, noise, landscape, ecology, cultural values and traffic. These adverse effects need to be appropriately managed and weighed against the benefits of enabling increased generation capacity and efficiency of existing renewable electricity generation facilities.

Additionally, renewable electricity generation activities can only occur where the energy source (such as an abundance of solar or wind) exists and may need to integrate with existing supporting infrastructure such as electricity distribution networks.

Chapter B3.4 Energy of the Regional Policy Statement (RPS) recognises these challenges. The objectives under B3.4.1 in broad terms seek to increase renewable electricity generation and promote energy efficiency and conservation.

The purpose of this monitoring report is to understand the extent of whether the Auckland Unitary Plan (AUP) is effective and efficient at achieving the objectives sought under Chapter B3.4.1.

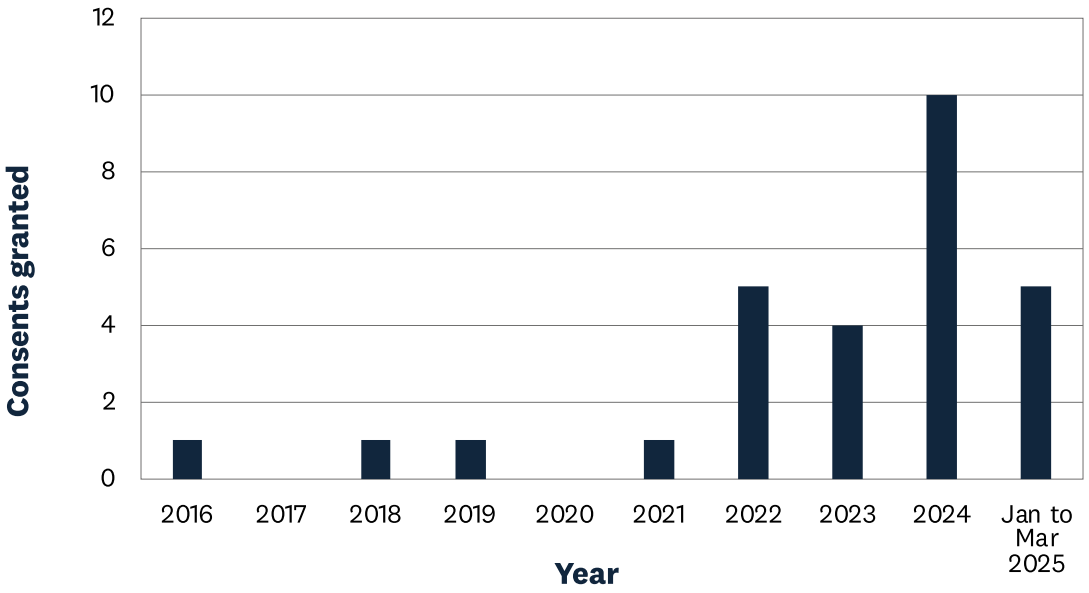
The main information sources used were assessment of resource consents, Electricity Authority data on ICPs (installation control points) with solar generation, and website information. The resource consents information relates to consents granted between 2016 and March 2025; and the Electricity Authority data relates to the number of residential, commercial and industrial ICPs between March 2016 and March 2025.

[1] Renewable energy means energy produced from solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, biomass, tidal, wave, and ocean current sources. Renewable electricity generation is the generation of electricity from these sources. It also includes the construction, operation, maintenance, and upgrading of structures associated with these activities.

Findings from information sources

Between 2016 and March 2025, there were 28 resource consents that were granted for the installation of solar panels on the roofs of dwellings. All these dwellings were located on Residential – Single House zoned sites and subject to the Historic Heritage and Special Character Areas overlay in the AUP (see **Figure 1** below).

Figure 1: Resource consents granted for installation of solar panels for residential dwellings.



Source: Auckland Council, Resource Consent data, 2016-2025.

The small number of resource consents is not indicative of renewable electricity generation activities being unduly constrained by the provisions of the AUP. The enabling zoning and rules framework of the AUP, provides for small-scale renewable electricity generation activities in all zones (except roads and strategic transport corridor zones) and community-scale renewable electricity generation activities (in industrial, rural and future urban zones) as permitted activities that don't require resource consent.

Two community-scale solar farms, and an outline plan of works for a floating solar array at Rosedale Wastewater Treatment Plant have also been consented by the council (see **Table 1**). Additionally, two proposals for large-scale solar farms are being planned or in the process of applying for resource consent, along with a solar farm project in Wellsford being listed to follow the fast-track process under the Fast-track Approvals Act (2024) (see **Table 2**).

Table 1: Resource consents and outline plan of works granted.

Application	Description	Lodged	Approved	Notification pathway	Status	Local Board
Rosedale Wastewater Treatment Plant	Install a 1040 kW floating solar array	May 2019 (via Outline Plan of Works)	June 2019	N/A	Constructed and commissioned 2020	Upper Harbour
Solar Farm	3 hectare, 2.5 Mega Watt Solar Farm at Glenbrook	February 2022	September 2022	Non-notified	Constructed and commissioned 2023	Franklin
Solar Farm	13 hectare, 13 Mega Watt Solar Farm at Ardmore	April 2023	February 2024	Non-notified	Constructed and commissioned 2025	Franklin

Table 2: Proposals for large-scale solar farms.

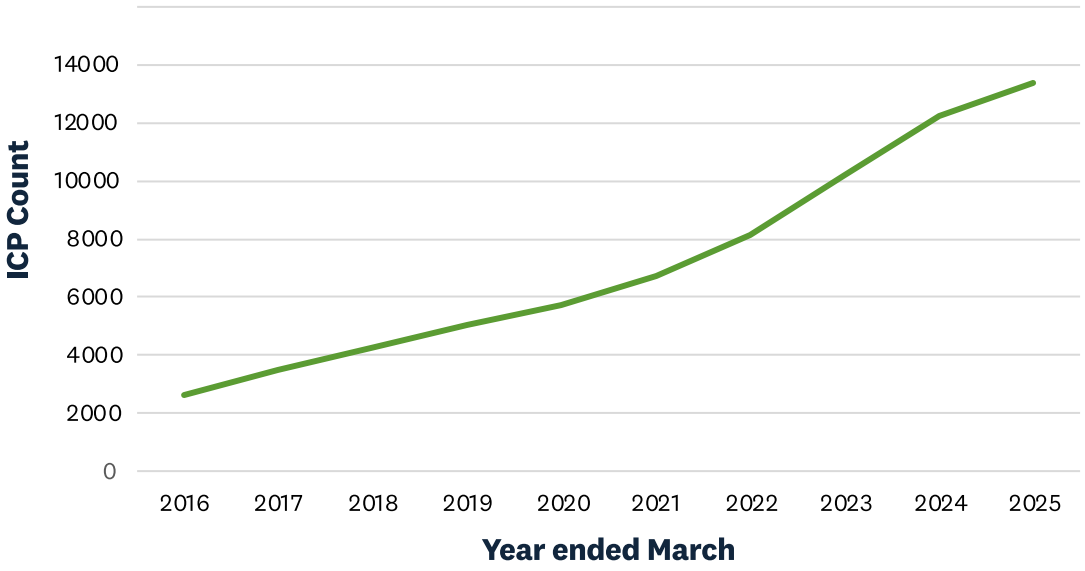
Application	Description	Status	Local Board
Solar Farm	175 Mega Watt (DC) Solar Farm, located adjacent to the Kaipara Coast Highwayin Glorit	Project referred to the Environmental Protection Agency to use the fast-track consenting process under the Natural and Built Environment Act 2023. Application lodged and in progress.[2]	Rodney
Solar Farm	50 Mega Watt Solar Farm at Helensville	Publicly notified – awaiting hearing of resource consent application.	Rodney
Solar Farm	76 Mega Watt Solar Farm at Wellsford	Project has been listed to follow the Fast-track process under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024.[3]	Rodney

The ICP counts from the Electricity Authority data for residential solar connections continues to grow from 2,635 in March 2016 to 13,401 in March 2025. An increase of 10,766 over this period (see **Figure 2**). However, relative to the total number of dwellings in 2023, residential solar connections in March 2025 accounted for only 2.2 per cent of dwellings in Auckland.

[2] Environmental Protect Authority website **epa.govt.nz/fast-track-consenting/nbea-fast-track-projects/glorit-solar-farm/**

[3] Ministry for the Environment, Fast-track website **fasttrack.govt.nz**

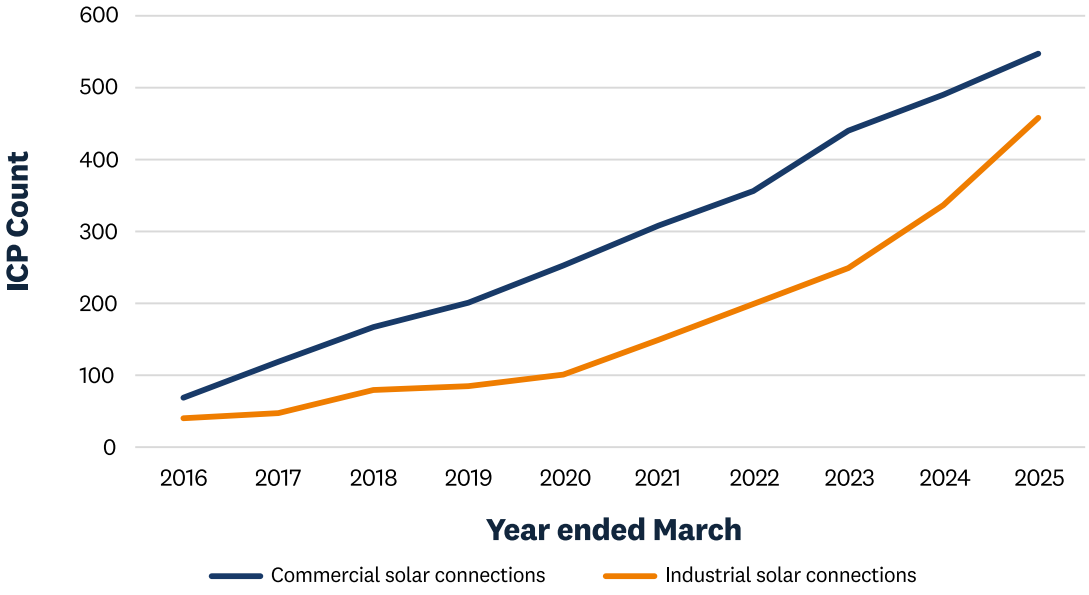
Figure 2: Residential solar connections by installation control point (ICP) count for Auckland, March 2016 to March 2025.



Source: EMI (Electricity Authority website) installed generation trends.

The number of ICP counts for commercial and industrial solar connections also continues to grow (see **Figure 3**). Between March 2016 and March 2025, commercial solar connections increased from 69 to 548 (up 479 since 2016), and industrial solar connections from 41 to 458 (up 417 since 2016).

Figure 3: Commercial and industrial solar connections by installation control point (ICP) count for Auckland, March 2016 to March 2025.EMI (Electricity Authority website) installed generation trend.



Source: EMI (Electricity Authority website) installed generation trends.

Summary of main findings

The lack of monitoring data on how the AUP is increasing renewable electricity generation and explicitly promoting energy efficiency and conservation (i.e. through enabling a quality compact city form that reduces demand for travel or through energy-efficient development and design), has made it difficult to reach a clear conclusion on the AUP's contribution to achieving the outcomes sought in the RPS. Notwithstanding this, the monitoring has provided some overall observations.

Where is the plan performing well?

- Installed solar generation capacity has continued to increase since the AUP became operative.
- The AUP enables small-scale renewable electricity generation and electrical charging stations in all zones, and community-scale electricity generation (in industrial, rural and future urban zones) to be permitted without the need for resource consents, subject to compliance with standards.
- Resource consent granted for renewable electricity generation activities are all subject to compliance monitoring.

Where is the plan underperforming?

- Objective B3.4.1(2) in Chapter B3.4 on promoting energy efficiency and conservation lacks a supporting policy.
- The AUP lacks environmental results anticipated, indicators and measures for monitoring of RPS B3.4 Energy objectives.
- There is a lack of an integrated monitoring framework that links key information on resource consents, compliance reporting and handling of complaints with the anticipated environmental results of RPS Chapter B3.4 to understand the effectiveness of provisions and inform future plan development.
- Lack of explicit references that require the planning for renewable electricity generation activities, and energy efficiency and conservation practices in the structure plan process set out in Appendix 1 – Structure Plan Guidelines to the AUP.
- A definition for 'community-scale electricity generation' is needed to provide clarity on whether an activity that does not meet the thresholds for small-scale electricity generation standards, becomes assessed as a community-scale activity.

- Lack of recognition that the generating and storage capacity of small-scale and community-scale renewable electricity generation activities are increasing, driven by more efficient technologies such as small and micro-scale transmission, solar and wind hybrid systems, and battery storage systems.
- There is a need to review the AUP zoning and rules framework to ensure that it is robust enough to address the environmental effects of applications for large-scale renewable electricity generation projects; rather than smaller, renewable energy projects and retrofits that have largely occurred in Auckland.
- There is poor understanding of the cumulative effects of permitted activities for small-scale and community-scale renewable electricity generation activities that individually have only minor effects but can be widespread. Monitoring of these activities is needed to ensure compliance with AUP provisions, assess the effectiveness of these provisions, and identify potential environmental issues or problems before they become serious.

Recommendations from these findings are not included in this summary report. See the technical report for more detail and recommendations.

Auckland Council (2025). Auckland Unitary Plan.
Resource Management Act 1991, Section 35 monitoring:
B3.4 Energy, Summary Report.
Planning and Resource Consents Department.

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