DRAFT NATIONAL PLANNING STANDARDS FURTHER EVALUATION REPORT 2019

Evaluation of changes made to the draft first set of National Planning Standards - Report under sections 58E(1)(b) and 32AA of the Resource Management Act

New Zealand Government

This document is available on the Ministry for the Environment website: www.mfe.govt.nz.

Ministry for the
Environment
Manatū Mō Te Taiao

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Contents

1   Overview

1.1   Why is this report needed?

This report provides an evaluation under Section 32AA (s32AA) of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) of amendments to the draft National Planning Standards (planning standards or standards) since they were notified for public consultation in June 2018.

Section 32AA requires further evaluation of changes that have been made to the draft planning standards since the original evaluation report was completed. This further evaluation must be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of section 32 of the RMA, with a level of detail that corresponds to the scale and significance of the changes.

> *(1) A further evaluation required under this Act—*
>
> > *(a) is required only for any changes that have been made to, or are proposed for, the proposal since the evaluation report for the proposal was completed (the changes); and*
> >
> > *(b) must be undertaken in accordance with section 32(1) to (4); and*
> >
> > *(c) must, despite paragraph (b) and section 32(1)(c), be undertaken at a level of detail that corresponds to the scale and significance of the changes; and*
> >
> > *(d) must—*
> >
> > > *(i) be published in an evaluation report that is made available for public inspection at the same time as the approved proposal (in the case of a national policy statement or a New Zealand coastal policy statement or a national planning standard), or the decision on the proposal, is notified; or*
> > >
> > > *(ii) be referred to in the decision-making record in sufficient detail to demonstrate that the further evaluation was undertaken in accordance with this section.*
>
> *(2) To avoid doubt, an evaluation report does not have to be prepared if a further evaluation is undertaken in accordance with subsection (1)(d)(ii).*
>
> *(3) In this section, proposal means a proposed statement, national planning standard, plan, or change for which a further evaluation must be undertaken under this Act.*

1.2   Section 32 analysis of the proposed National Planning Standards

This report should be read in conjunction with the s32 analysis of the draft planning standards prepared by the Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry). It updates that report and draws upon its findings where necessary. The original s32 assessment can be found on the Ministry's website.

## 1.3   Evaluation approach used in this report

The difference between an s32 analysis of a notified policy and an s32AA analysis of subsequent changes to the proposed policy can be summed up as follows:

- a s32 analysis should assess the overall costs and benefits of the proposed policy relative to the status quo established by existing policies and features of the market

- a s32AA analysis should assess the marginal costs and benefits of changes to the proposed policy, relative to the version assessed in the s32 analysis.

This is summarised in the following diagram.

Figure 1: s32 analysis versus s32AA analysis
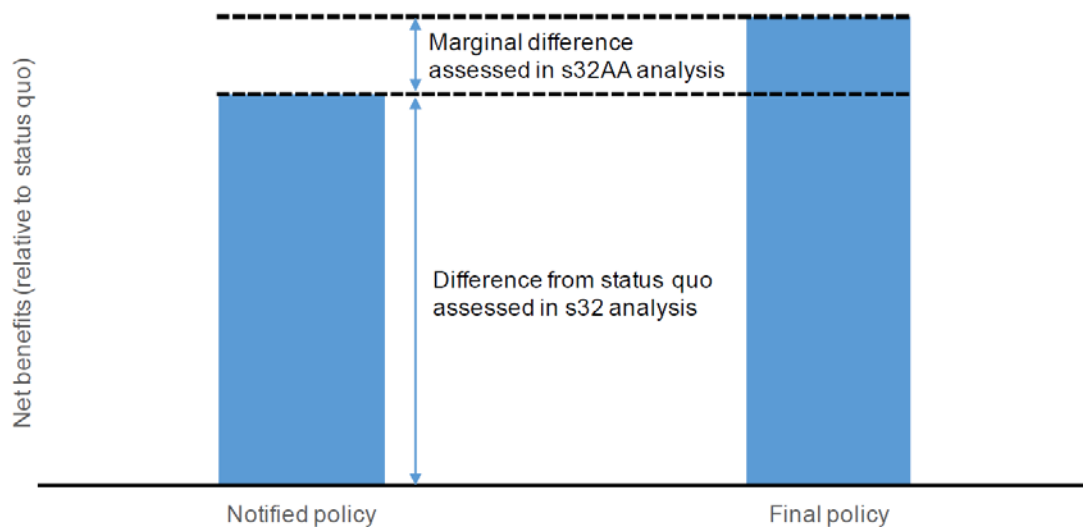
Consequently, this evaluation focuses on the key areas where the final planning standards vary significantly from the draft planning standards released for public consultation.

Other changes to the standards are addressed in the series of Recommendations on Submission reports available from the Ministry's website. These form a comprehensive report made up of several parts that address the submissions received and the recommended responses to submissions. Consequently, they goes into much greater detail than this s32AA report. This report assesses four major changes to the standards and the options that could have been used to address these changes.

Therefore this report:
- identifies and describe the key changes to the planning standards

- assess the effects of these changes, focusing on the objectives of the planning standards

- provides a summary assessment of the preferred options, including the degree to which they are likely to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the standards.

This report does not revisit the statutory context of the planning standards, reassess the objectives of the standards or reiterate the evidence base for the first set of standards.

As highlighted in the original s32 report for the standards, although the first set of standards will not have a direct effect on environmental outcomes, they will create opportunity benefits for individual planning processes and the planning systems as a whole. They will do this by enabling local authorities to direct more resources to managing environmental effects instead of deciding more administrative matters.

An updated Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) Summary has also been prepared for the planning standards. This is a higher level document and considers the planning standards as a holistic package rather than on an individual change basis. The RIS is available on the Ministry for the Environment website, and should be read in conjunction with this report.

1.4 Policy objectives

As outlined in the original s32 report, a set of policy objectives were created for the first set of planning standards so the standards could be assessed for appropriateness. The objectives outline what the planning standard should achieve and assist in testing reasonable alternatives to standards proposed. The objectives listed below were developed based on the requirements of the RMA, and the problems that the planning standards are trying to solve.

Objective 1: An appropriate level of standardisation is achieved for matters that don't need local variation:

- avoid duplication of effort

- ensure that only matters that do not need local input are included in the standard

- standardises how National Direction is represented and implemented in plans

- aims to result in standards where the effort put in by councils to implement the standards is commensurate with the level of standardisation achieved.

Objective 2: Improve the accessibility and usability of plans and policy statements:

- plans are easier to access

- plans are easier to understand

- electronic functionality is used to improve accessibility wherever possible.

Objective 3: Improve plan-making baseline performance:

- shorter timeframes

- less resource intensive

- more focus on local outcomes

- assist in good practice being adopted in a more timely manner.

Objective 4: Implementation of the standards is practical and feasible, while taking into account the:

- resource intensity needed to implement the standards

- capacity and capability of councils to implement the planning standards

- efficiency of central government having ownership, associated ongoing responsibility and maintenance costs for this level of standard.

1.5 Overview of key changes

The s32AA evaluation report analyses the most significant changes to the draft planning standards as set out in Table 1 below. This report considers the changes that are of a level that was originally considered in the original s32 reports. There are many changes to the standards that are not significant enough to be assessed in this report.

Table 1: Summary of main changes proposed and assessed in this report

Matter	Proposed approach
1. Add four additional zones to the zone framework and amend zone standard and descriptions Submitters were concerned that the needs of their area could not be meet within the existing zones provided.	To add four zones: • a large format retail zone • an additional residential zone • a metropolitan centre zone • a corrections zone To amend zone names and descriptions based on feedback from submissions.
2. Reconsider the combined plan structure Submitters indicated that the combined plan structure does not account for differences between regional councils and unitary councils. Unitary authorities requested a structure that better integrates regional policy statement provisions.	To replace the combined plan structure with two different structures tailored for specific types of combined plans: • a combined regional policy statement–regional plan–district plan • a combined regional policy statement–regional plan.
3. Remove rule format tables from the planning standards Submitters indicated that the rule tables are difficult to read and implement.	To remove the rule format tables and some of the associated directions from the planning standards and provide these as guidance. Include some high-level directions relating to rule formatting in the format standard.
4. Amend the implementation timeframes for the standards Submitters were concerned about the cost in both time and resources for councils to carry out reviews of their plans outside of scheduled review.	To create a new standard for implementation. The following timeframes would be kept: • at plan review, or five years for most district councils and seven years for district councils who have recently completed a plan review to implement the majority of the planning standards, and • one year for all councils to implement the electronic accessibility and functionality standard. To amend the timeframes as follows: • require RPSs to be amended within three years but provide a longer timeframe for all other regional plans and for unitary councils preparing unitary plans (10 years) • allow a further two years for district councils to implement the definitions standard • councils collaborating on a combined district plan be given seven years to implement the planning standards • a longer implementation timeframe (10 years) for ePlans for councils with fewer than 15,000 ratepayers • exceptions from the ePlan requirements for plans prepared for the Chatham Islands, Outer Islands and Subantarctic Islands.

Part 2 of this report makes detailed assessments of the individual changes noted above.

Part 2 - Analysis of individual changes

In this section, the four major changes to the planning standard are assessed on a case-by-case basis, focusing on the options considered being assessed against the four objectives to the planning standards.

2.1 Adding zones to the Zone Framework Standard

2.1.1 Reasons for the changes

A number of submissions were received on the Area Specific Matters Standard (later renamed to the Zone Framework Standard) requesting that additional zones be included. Submitters considered additional zones were necessary to accommodate local contexts more effectively and avoid plan complexity resulting from the increased use of overlay and precinct spatial layers to achieve desired outcomes.

Requests for over 20 additional zones were received through submissions. A number of the requested zones are in fact better accounted for in plans through the use of other spatial layers, such as overlays and precincts. In some cases the criteria to create a special purpose zone may be met and a council can use a zoning response. The options considered below are for zones that should be standardised in the Zone Framework Standard. These zones are:

- 'Large format retail' zone
- 'Low density residential zone'
- 'Metropolitan centre zone'
- 'Corrections zone'.

2.1.2 Scale and significance

Section 32(1)(c) of the RMA states that a section 32AA evaluation must contain a level of detail that corresponds to the scale and significance of the effects of the proposal. It is considered that the planning standards as a package are of a large scale and high significance. However, each individual standard will be of varying scale and significance.

The inclusion of additional zones to the zone framework is considered to be of a low scale and significance as including these zones expands on the zone framework proposed and does not represent a substantial change to the proposal consulted on. Including the zones also responds to submitter requests that including these zones would improve the workability and clarity of plans.

2.1.3 Options considered

Under section 32(1)(b) of the RMA, the Ministry is required to identify and examine reasonably practicable options for achieving the proposed objectives outlined. "Reasonably practicable" is not defined in the RMA, but may include options that:

- are both regulatory and non-regulatory

- are targeted towards achieving the goal/objective

- are within the Ministry's resources, duties and powers

- represent a reasonable range of possible alternatives.

For each additional zone included we have assessed the two options:

    A. Including the zone in the Zone Framework Standard

    B. Not including the zone (status quo of draft standard).

Tables 3-5 detail an evaluation of these options relating to the costs and benefits to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the approach, and whether it is the most appropriate way to achieve the relevant objective(s).

2.1.4 Options evaluation

Tables 3-5 below assesses the costs, benefits, efficiency and effectiveness of the options considered against the objectives of the planning standards.

Table 2: Options analysis for additional zones included the Zone Framework Standard

Planning standards objectives	
Objective 1: An appropriate level of standardisation is achieved for matters that don't need local variation: • avoid duplication of effort • ensure that only matters that do not need local input are included in the standard • standardises how national direction is represented and implemented in plans • result in standards where the effort put in by councils to implement the standards is commensurate with the level of standardisation achieved.	**Objective 2: Improve the accessibility and usability of plans:** • plans are easier to access • plans are easier to understand • electronic functionality is used to improve accessibility wherever possible.
Objective 3: Improve plan-making baseline performance: • shorter timeframes • less resource intensive • more focus on local outcomes • assist in good practice being adopted in a more timely manner.	**Objective 4: Implementation of the standards is practical and feasible, while taking into account the:** • resource intensity needed to implement the planning standards • capacity and capability of councils to implement the planning standards • efficiency of central government having ownership, associated ongoing responsibility and maintenance costs for this level of standard.

Table 3: Large format retail zone

Option 1A Include a 'Large format retail' zone in the Zone Framework Standard		
Include a 'Large format retail' zone with the zone description: *Areas used predominantly for commercial activities which require large floor or yard areas.*	**Costs**	**Benefits**
	Councils No additional direct cost to councils to include this zone in the Zone Framework Standard. If selected for use in a district plan through the discretionary direction option (that uses an RMA Schedule One process) there would be a cost incurred but this would not be specific to this single zone and be part of a wider process to implement the Zone Framework Standard. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** Cost to develop and test zone description and associated guidance material. **Plan users/general public** No costs identified**.**	**Councils** • If included outright in the Zone Framework Standard, councils with an equivalent zone in their district plans can select it and implement it, likely without the need for an RMA Schedule One process. • Reduction of duplication of effort. Inclusion of the zone avoids the need for councils to develop bespoke spatial layers (such as precincts) to complement a 'Commercial zone' to achieve the intent of the zone if currently used in a district plan, saving resources. • Councils will have plans that are more straightforward to prepare and easier to understand. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** • Supports an understood planning approach to this type of land use. • Will help reduce plan complexity and make plans less wordy. **Plan users/general public** • Certainty for owners/operators of sites with this type of zoning who can have confidence that the approach may continue. • A more straightforward approach for plan users to understand provisions applying to a particular site or area.
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness** This option is effective as it provides a straightforward approach to the management of these activities that can be easily understood by plan users and avoids potential complexity resulting from the use of overlay and precinct spatial layers to achieve desired outcomes.	**Efficiency** This option is efficient as: • councils will have an efficient and simple approach to including provisions for these activities and type of land use in plans if they already have, or choose to use the zone. It will help to reduce the time that plan users spend interrogating plans • many councils will be able to continue their current approach and avoid having to make changes.

Overall evaluation	This option is considered to be the most effective, efficient and most reasonably practicable option, which builds on the draft Zone Framework Standard to:
	• avoid plan complexity to 'reverse engineer' the intent of the zone, and avoids duplication of effort to develop these alternative approaches (meets Objectives 1 and 2)
	• reflect a common planning approach understood by plan users (meets Objective 2)
	• allow a current common zoning approach to continue, avoiding unnecessary change and resource expenditure by councils to make changes to their plan and to users to understand the change (meets Objective 3 and 4).

Option 1B: Do not include a 'Large format retail' zone in the Zone Framework Standard

Do not include a 'Large format retail' zone in the Zone Framework Standard.	Costs	Benefits
	Councils	**Councils**
	• Increased costs to develop bespoke spatial layer provisions to 'reverse engineer' this common type of zone in district plans or develop a special purpose zone for these activities/land uses.	No benefits identified.
		Ministry for the Environment, and central government
	• Increased costs/resources for councils that use these zones explaining to their community and plan users why the zoning approach they are familiar with is no longer followed (as the zone is not available for use).	Savings made needing to develop and test zone description and associated guidance material.
		Plan users
	• Ongoing costs to continue to develop approaches to manage these activities (where an approach could have been standardised at a national level).	No benefits identified.
	Ministry for the Environment, and central government	
	• Opportunity cost where these types of activities/land uses could have followed a standardised approach.	
	• Guidance would need to be developed how these activities/land use should be managed in absence of a zone.	
	Plan users	
	Increased cost/resource to owners/operators who rely on this zone currently and need to understand a new policy and rule framework to manage these activities.	
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness**	**Efficiency**
	This option is considered to be less effective than Option 1A.	This option is considered to be less efficient than Option 1A.

	To achieve the outcomes sought by the zone, a combination of zones and precinct/overlay spatial layers would be required. This could result in uncertainty for plan makers about how to develop these provisions and it may be less intuitive for plan users to understand the land use opportunities available when engaging with the plan.	To achieve the same outcomes as the zone, a combination of zones and precinct/overlay spatial layers would be required. This would require resource expenditure by a number of councils to develop a compatible suite of provisions, and for users to understand how they function together.
Overall evaluation	Overall this option is not considered to be efficient, effective or the most reasonably practicable compared to Option 1A. Excluding this common zone is likely to: • increase plan complexity to 'reverse engineer' the intent of the zone, and does not avoid duplication of effort as alternative approaches will need to be developed (contrary to Objectives 1 and 2) • not reflect a common planning approach understood by plan users (contrary to Objective 2) • not allow a current common zoning approach to continue, and unnecessarily cause change and resource expenditure by councils to make changes to their plan and to users to understand the change (contrary to Objective 3 and 4).	

Table 4:   Low density residential zone

Option 2A: Include an additional 'Low density residential zone' in the Zone Framework Standard		
Include an additional 'Low density residential zone' with the zone description: *Areas used predominantly for residential activities and buildings consistent with a suburban scale and subdivision pattern, such as one to two storey houses with yards and landscaping, and other compatible activities.*	**Costs**	**Benefits**
	Councils No additional direct cost to councils to include this zone in the Zone Framework Standard. If selected for use in a district plan through the discretionary direction option (that uses an RMA Schedule One process) there would be a cost incurred but this would not be specific to this single zone and be part of a wider process to implement the Zone Framework Standard. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** Cost to develop and test zone description and associated guidance material. **Plan users/general public** No costs identified.	**Councils** • If included outright in the Zone Framework Standard, councils with an equivalent zone in their district plans can select it and implement it, likely without the need for an RMA Schedule One process. • Reduction of duplication of effort. Inclusion of the zone avoids the need for councils to develop bespoke spatial layers (such as precincts) to achieve the intent of the zone if currently used in a district plan, saving resources. • Supports Auckland Council to continue an understood planning approach to this type of development pattern in the Auckland Unitary Plan. • Auckland Council will have a more straightforward and easier to understand plan. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** Will help reduce plan complexity and make plans less wordy. **Plan users/general public**

		• Certainty for owners/operators of sites with this type of zoning who can have confidence that the approach may continue, particularly in Auckland.
		• A more straightforward approach for plan users to understand provisions applying to a particular site or area.
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness** This option is effective as it provides a straightforward approach to the management of this type of development pattern that can be easily understood by plan users and avoids potential complexity resulting from the use of overlay and precinct spatial layers to achieve desired outcomes.	**Efficiency** This option is efficient as: • Auckland Council will be able to continue to use this understood zone-based approach and avoid revisiting policy framework for residential zones • it will help to reduce the time that plan users spend interrogating plans where these outcomes would otherwise be achieved through overlay and precinct spatial layers.
Overall evaluation	Including this zone was considered extremely important for submitters, particularly in the context of the Auckland Unitary Plan, the country's largest and most complex plan. Further research confirmed that if the zone wasn't included in the Zone Framework it would result in unnecessary plan complexity. This option is considered to be the most effective, efficient and most reasonably practicable option, which builds on the draft Zone Framework Standard to: • avoid plan complexity to 'reverse engineer' the intent of the zone, and avoids duplication of effort to develop these alternative approaches (meets Objectives 1 and 2) • reflect a planning approach understood by plan users (meets Objective 2) • allow a current common zoning approach to continue, avoiding unnecessary change and resource expenditure by councils to make changes to their plan and to users to understand the change (meets Objective 3 and 4).	

Option 2B: Do not include an additional 'Low density residential zone' in the Zone Framework Standard

Do not include an additional 'Low density residential zone' in the Zone Framework Standard.	**Costs**	**Benefits**
	Councils • Increased costs to develop bespoke spatial layer provisions to 'reverse engineer' this type of zone in district plans or develop a special purpose zone for these activities/land uses. • Increased costs/resources for councils (particularly Auckland Council) that use these zones explaining to their community and plan users why the zoning approach they are familiar with is no longer followed (as the zone is not available for use).	**Councils** No benefits identified. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** Savings made in not needing to develop and test zone description and associated guidance material. **Plan users** No benefits identified.

	• Ongoing costs to continue to develop approaches to manage this development pattern (where an approach could have been standardised at a national level). **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** • Opportunity cost where this type of development pattern could have followed a standardised approach. • Guidance would need to be developed on how these activities/land use should be managed in absence of a zone. **Plan users** Increased cost/resource to owners/operators who rely on this zone currently and need to understand a new policy and rule framework to manage these activities.	
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness** This option is considered to be less effective than Option 2A. To achieve the outcomes sought by the zone, a combination of zones and precinct/overlay spatial layers would be required. This could result in uncertainty for plan makers about how to develop these provisions and may be less intuitive for plan users to understand the land-use opportunities available when engaging with the plan.	**Efficiency** This option is considered to be less efficient than Option 2A. To achieve the outcomes sought by the zone, a combination of zones and precinct/overlay spatial layers would be required. This would require resource expenditure by a number of councils to develop a compatible suite of provisions, and for users to understand how they function together.
Overall evaluation	Overall this option is not considered to be efficient, effective or the most reasonably practicable compared to Option 2A. It is particularly problematic in the context of the Auckland Unitary Plan, the country's largest and most complex plan. Further research confirmed that if the zone wasn't included in the Zone Framework it would result in unnecessary plan complexity and a more difficult transition process for Auckland Council and the community. Excluding this zone is likely to: • increase plan complexity to 'reverse engineer' the intent of the zone, and does not avoid duplication of effort as alternative approaches will need to be developed (contrary to Objectives 1 and 2) • not reflect a common planning approach understood by plan users (contrary to Objective 2) • cause change and resource expenditure by councils to make changes to their plan and to users to understand the change (contrary to Objective 3 and 4).	

Table 5:   **Metropolitan centre zone**

Option 3A: Include a 'Metropolitan centre zone' in the Zone Framework Standard		
Include a 'Metropolitan centre zone' with the zone description: *Areas used predominantly for a broad range of commercial, community, recreational and residential activities. The zone is a focal point for sub-regional urban catchments.*	**Costs**	**Benefits**
	Councils No additional direct cost to councils to include this zone in the Zone Framework Standard. If selected for use in a district plan through the discretionary direction option (that uses an RMA Schedule One process) there would be a cost incurred but this would not be specific to this single zone and be part of a wider process to implement the Zone Framework Standard. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** Cost to develop and test zone description and associated guidance material. **Plan users/general public** No costs identified.	**Councils** • If included outright in the Zone Framework Standard, councils with an equivalent zone in their district plans can select it and implement it, likely without the need for an RMA Schedule One process. • Reduction of duplication of effort. Inclusion of the zone avoids the need for councils to develop bespoke spatial layers (such as precincts) to achieve the intent of the zone if currently used in a district plan, saving resources. • Supports Auckland Council to continue an understood planning approach to this type of development pattern in the Auckland Unitary Plan. • Auckland Council will have a more straightforward and easier to understand plan. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** • Supports an understood planning layer/approach to these types of development pattern/centres type, consistent with the intent of the planning standards more generally. • Will help reduce plan complexity and make plans less wordy. **Plan users/general public** • Certainty for owners/operators of sites with this type of zoning who can have confidence that a familiar approach may continue. • A more straightforward approach for plan users to understand provisions applying to a particular site or area.
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness** This option is effective as it provides a straightforward approach to the management of this type of development pattern/centres type that can be easily understood by plan users and avoids potential complexity resulting from the use of overlay and precinct spatial layers to achieve desired outcomes.	**Efficiency** This option is efficient as: • Auckland Council will be able to continue to use this understood zone-based approach and avoid revisiting policy framework for centres • it will help to reduce the time that plan users spend interrogating plans where these outcomes would otherwise be achieved through overlay and precinct spatial layers.

Overall evaluation	Including this zone was considered extremely important for submitters, particularly in the context of the Auckland Unitary Plan, the country's largest and most complex plan. Further research confirmed that if the zone wasn't included in the Zone Framework it would result in unnecessary plan complexity and a more difficult transition process for Auckland Council and the community.	
	This option is considered to be the most effective, efficient and most reasonably practicable option, which builds on the draft Zone Framework Standard to:	
	• avoid plan complexity to 'reverse engineer' the intent of the zone, and avoids duplication of effort to develop these alternative approaches (meets Objectives 1 and 2)	
	• reflect a planning approach understood by plan users (meets Objective 2)	
	• allow a current common zoning approach to continue, avoiding unnecessary change and resource expenditure by councils to make changes to their plan and to users to understand the change (meets Objective 3 and 4).	

Option 3B: Do not include a 'Metropolitan centre zone' in the Zone Framework Standard

Do not include a 'Metropolitan centre zone' in the Zone Framework Standard.	**Costs**	**Benefits**
	Councils	**Councils**
	• Increased costs to develop bespoke spatial layer provisions to 'reverse engineer' this common type of zone in district plans or develop a special purpose zone for these activities/land uses.	No benefits identified
		Ministry for the Environment, and central government
	• Increased costs/resources for councils that use these zones (particularly Auckland Council) explaining to their community and plan users why the zoning approach they are familiar with is no longer followed (as the zone is not available for use).	Savings made needing to develop and test zone description and associated guidance material.
		Plan users
	• Ongoing costs to continue to develop approaches to manage these activities/centres type (where an approach could have been standardised at a national level).	No benefits identified.
	Ministry for the Environment, and central government	
	• Opportunity cost where these types of activities/centres type could have followed a standardised approach.	
	• Guidance would need to be developed on how these activities/land use should be managed in absence of a zone.	
	Plan users	

	Increased cost/resource to owners/operators who rely on this zone currently and need to understand a new policy and rule framework to manage these activities.	
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness** This option is considered to be less effective than Option 3A. To achieve the outcomes sought by the zone, a combination of zones and precinct/overlay spatial layers would be required. This could result in uncertainty for plan makers about how to develop these provisions and may be less intuitive for plan users to understand the land-use opportunities available when engaging with the plan.	**Efficiency** This option is considered to be less efficient than Option 3A. To achieve the outcomes sought by the zone, a combination of zones and precinct/overlay spatial layers would be required. This would require resource expenditure by a number of councils to develop a compatible suite of provisions, and for users to understand how they function together.
Overall evaluation	Overall this option is not considered to be efficient, effective or the most reasonably practicable compared to Option 3A. It is particularly problematic in the context of the Auckland Unitary Plan, the country's largest and most complex plan. Further research confirmed that if the zone wasn't included in the Zone Framework it would result in unnecessary plan complexity. Excluding this zone is likely to: • increase plan complexity to 'reverse engineer' the intent of the zone, and does not avoid duplication of effort as alternative approaches will need to be developed (contrary to Objectives 1 and 2) • not reflect a common planning approach understood by plan users (contrary to Objective 2) • cause change and resource expenditure by councils to make changes to their plan and to users to understand the change (contrary to Objective 3 and 4).	

Table 6:   Corrections Zone

Option 4A: Include a 'Corrections zone' in the Zone Framework Standard		
Include a 'Corrections zone' with the zone description: *Areas used predominantly for the efficient operation and development of prisons and associated facilities and activities and the security requirements of prisons. The zone may also be used for new and changing approaches to prisoner reintegration and rehabilitation.*	**Costs**	**Benefits**
	Councils • No additional direct cost to councils to include this zone in the Zone Framework Standard. If selected for use in a district plan through the discretionary direction option (that uses an RMA Schedule One process) there would be a cost incurred but this would not be specific to this single zone and be part of a wider process to implement the Zone Framework Standard. Any zoning change would be made following a specific request from the Department of Corrections. • Potential administrative costs and confusion resulting from application of a dual designation/zoning approach to accommodating the establishment of corrections facilities. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** • Administrative cost to the Ministry and the Department of Corrections to develop and test zone description and associated guidance material • Administrative cost to the Department of Corrections to seek inclusion of the zone and supporting provisions in plans at the time of review or as a plan change, along with ongoing compliance costs. **Plan users/general public** • Potential interpretive confusion regarding the relative role of, and inter-relationship between, zoning vs the designation process in facilitating establishment of corrections facilities.	**Councils** • Provides a clear statement of anticipated intent, and offers an alternative frame of reference for considering how corrections facilities are managed through plans. • Increases the range of options available to councils to cater for new and emergent approaches to prisoner reintegration and rehabilitation (eg, low security 'residential style' accommodation), thereby reducing the need to rely on the designation process regardless of the nature and scale of the facility proposed. • May provide a positive catalyst for councils to consider applying a zone-based approach to identifying and managing corrections facilities, particularly those which are more residential in nature and firmly focused on prisoner reintegration and rehabilitation. • May reduce the administrative costs to councils of having to engage in designation process (ie, notice of requirement, outline plan) to enable the establishment of corrections facilities. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** • May allow the Department of Corrections more flexibility to manage the operation and development of its facilities to adapt to the changing needs and expectations of the corrections network, and more responsive approaches to prisoner reintegration and rehabilitation. • Increases the range of options available to the Department of Corrections to cater for new and emergent approaches to prisoner reintegration and rehabilitation (eg, low security 'residential style' accommodation), thereby reducing the need to rely on the designation process, regardless of the nature and scale of the facility proposed. • May enable development of more effective policy frameworks to inform consideration of notices of requirement. • Provides a clear signal of anticipated intent, thereby enabling the Department of Corrections to work with councils to have the zone and relevant supporting provisions included in district plans.

		Plan users/general public • More obvious to lay plan users that activities of the Department of Corrections occur when a zoning vs designation approach is used in a plan. • If applied would enable increased level of public input regarding the nature and extent of plan provisions relating to activities and future development within the zone. • Increases the level of transparency and certainty regarding the location of future corrections facilities.
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness** May be effective in providing greater flexibility in planning approaches for the Department of Corrections to manage the operation and development of its facilities where the current designations approach can be overly restrictive.	**Efficiency** May be efficient in being less resource intensive than current approaches, or work alongside current approaches to increase efficiency of the planning system.
Overall evaluation	Including this zone was considered important for the Department of Corrections to offer greater flexibility in responding to the changing needs of the corrections network, where the designations regime cannot respond to this need. This option is considered to be the most effective, efficient and most reasonably practicable option as although it does not meet the following objectives: • an appropriate level of standardisation is achieved for matters that don't need local variation (Objective 1) • implementation of the standards is practical and feasible (Objective 4) this is outweighed by: • offers greater flexibility to the Department of Corrections to respond to the changing needs of the corrections network, where the designations regime cannot respond to this need • introducing a zone-based option could also improve the usability and transparency of plans in terms of how corrections facilities are enabled and managed through plans (meets Objective 2) • over time will help good planning practice for Department of Corrections facilities to be shared across plans (meets Objective 3).	
Option 4B: Do not include a 'corrections zone' in the Zone Framework Standard		
Do not include a 'corrections zone' in the Zone Framework Standard.	**Costs**	**Benefits**
	Councils • Reduces the range of options available to councils to cater for new and emergent approaches to prisoner reintegration and rehabilitation (eg, low security 'residential style' accommodation), particularly as such facilities may not be	**Councils** Prevents potential administrative costs and confusion resulting from application of a dual designation/zoning approach to accommodating the establishment of corrections facilities.

suitably enabled through alternative spatial planning tools such as overlays, precincts or specific controls.

- May deter councils from considering a zone-based approach to identifying and managing corrections facilities as these have not been signalled in the standard as activities of significance to cities/districts.

- Ongoing administrative costs to councils of having to engage in designation process (ie, notice of requirement, outline plan) to enable the establishment of corrections facilities.

Ministry for the Environment, and central government

- May not be responsive or flexible enough to enable the Department of Corrections to adequately meet changing needs and expectations regarding prisoner reintegration and rehabilitation.

- Reinforces use of designations process as the sole means of establishing corrections facilities, regardless of the nature and scale of the facility proposed.

- Ongoing compliance costs to the Department of Corrections to seek amendments through the designations regime for its facilities to adapt to changing requirements of the corrections network, with uncertain outcomes due to underlying zoning.

Plan users

Increases potential uncertainty regarding the possible location of future corrections facilities through placing sole reliance on designations process to establish corrections facilities regardless of scale.

Ministry for the Environment, and central government.

Saves Department of Corrections resource otherwise needed to prepare zone descriptions, assist with implementation and develop guidance.

Plan users

Prevents potential interpretive confusion regarding the relative role of, and inter-relationship between, zoning vs the designation process in facilitating establishment of corrections facilities.

Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness**	**Efficiency**
	This option is considered to be less effective than Option 4A. It does not provide flexibility in the planning approach for the Department of Corrections to manage the operation and development of its facilities where the current designations approach is not supportive.	This option is considered to be less efficient than Option 4A. It does not reduce the use of resources expended by the Department of Corrections to manage the operation and development of its facilities.

Overall evaluation	Overall this option is considered to be less efficient, effective and less reasonably practicable than Option 4A.
	Excluding this zone is likely to:
	• not enable greater flexibility to the Department of Corrections to respond to the changing needs of the corrections network, where the designations regime cannot respond to this need
	• not make plans easier to understand for users where and how Department of Corrections facilities are operated (contrary to Objective 2)
	• not assist good planning practice for Department of Corrections facilities to be shared across plans (contrary to Objective 3).

2.1.5 Conclusion/summary of rationale for the preferred option

This evaluation has been undertaken in accordance with section 32AA of the RMA, to identify the need, benefits, costs and the appropriateness of the proposal. This must be done having regard to its effectiveness and efficiency relative to other means in achieving the purpose of the RMA.

The evaluation demonstrates that including additional large format retail, low density residential, metropolitan centre and corrections zones is the most appropriate option because of the following reasons:

- enhances the workability of the Zone Framework Standard to account for the range and variety of zones used in district plans and the land-use component of combined plans

- avoids increased plan complexity which would otherwise occur to 'reverse engineer' the intent of these zones by way of additional spatial layers, and could lead to outcomes inconsistent with the objectives of the planning standards

- assists the Department of Corrections by providing greater flexibility in responding to the changing needs of the corrections network

- allows a number of councils who use these zones to continue their established approach

- allows some plan users to not have to engage or understand with a new zoning approach for their site through an RMA Schedule One process.

2.2 Combined Plan Structure

2.2.1 Change from collective to individual combined plan structures with more integrated regional policy statement

The Combined Plan Structure Standard has changed from one structure where councils pick and choose parts for different types of combined plans, to a structure for each of the four possible combinations of Combined Plans under section 80 of the RMA. These combinations are:

Type 1:   regional policy statement–regional plan–district plan

Type 2:   regional policy statement–regional plan

Type 3:   regional policy statement–district plan

Type 4:   regional plan–district plan.

The type 1: regional policy statement–regional plan–district plan combination is the most common, with all unitary councils using or intending to use this structure. Two councils are currently using the type 2: regional policy statement–regional plan combination: Hawkes Bay Regional Council and Horizons (Manawatu–Wanganui) Regional Council.

No council is currently using the type 3 and type 4 structures, and currently this is unlikely to happen. A type 3: regional policy statement–district plan combination would involve the regional and district councils combining their high-level and local-level planning documents but excluding any regional plans for some reason.

A type 4: regional plan–district plan could be used if a council or councils wanted to keep its regional policy statement separate. However this situation is not efficient for councils. A separate regional policy statement document is useful when the regional policy statement has policies and methods that affect multiple plans. With a combined regional plan–district plan, the regional policy statement only affects that combined plan (and any separate regional plans).

Two new plan structures are provided for the first two combinations: type 1 regional policy statement–regional plan–district plan and type 2 regional policy statement–regional plan. If the other two combinations (type 3 and type 4) occur, councils can use the Introduction and General Provisions and the Appendices and Maps parts from the district plan structure, and stitch together the other relevant parts from the existing structures in the planning standards.

In the new structure for type 1 combined regional policy statement–regional plan–district plan, most of the regional policy statement provisions are integrated through the combined plan. This is different from the draft Combined Plan Structure Standard where the regional policy statement provisions were grouped at the front of the plan.

2.2.2 Reasons for the change to combined plan structures

Submitters identified that the draft Combined Plan Structure Standard was not efficient at a fundamental level. It did not provide certainty for councils, discouraged integrated management, and did not take advantage of the efficiencies that Combined Plan structures can have.

The assessment of options in table 6 in section 2.2.6 sets out these reasons in more detail.

2.2.3 Reasons for changes to integration of regional policy statement provisions in combined plans

Unitary plans[1] currently have varying levels of regional policy statement integration. Some councils group regional policy statement provisions at the front of the plan, arguing that a regional policy statement does not contain rules and is a higher order planning document. Other councils integrate regional policy statement provisions within the plan, arguing that this is a simpler and more coherent resource management framework. They also state that regional policy statement provisions in a unitary plan do not allocate responsibilities across councils and plans.

Regional policy statement integration was also a key point raised by submitters and these points are now reflected in the two new structures for combined plans. Section 18A of the RMA is also taken into consideration, which specifies that every person must take all practicable steps to (among other matters) ensure that policy statements and plans are worded in a way that is clear and concise. This applies to minimising duplication of content in plans.

In the type 1 regional policy statement–regional plan–district plan structure, high-level regional policy statement provisions are located in Part 2 – Resource Management Overview, and include the chapters:

- significant resource management issues for the region

- resource management issues of significance to iwi authorities

- integrated management (including urban form and development).

The detailed regional policy statement provisions on specific domains, themes and topics must be integrated with the other relevant plan provisions. Support was received for the concept when it was tested in a workshop with unitary council staff from across New Zealand.

The type 2 regional policy statement–regional plan structure, which some regional councils will use, is different from the unitary plan structure above. The regional policy statement content is separated from regional plan content. While this is a less simple structure, and some topic chapters are duplicated, it allows the regional policy statement content to provide clear direction to district plans, which, in this case, are separate plans. District plans must give effect to their regional policy statement. This reflects the structure of the two current regional policy statement–regional plan plans: the Horizons Regional Council One Plan and the Hawkes Bay Regional Council Regional Resource Management Plan.

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[1] Unitary plans are combined plans of unitary councils that include a regional policy statement, regional plan and district plan.

2.2.4 Scale and significance

Section 32(1)(c) of the RMA states that a section 32AA evaluation must contain a level of detail that corresponds to the scale and significance of the effects of the proposal. It is considered that the planning standards as a package are of a large scale and of high significance. However, each individual standard will be of varying scale and significance.

Replacement of the combined plan structure with four new combined plan structures, and the location of regional policy statement content within those structures, has large scale and but only medium significance. The change affects seven councils' planning documents and any councils that initiate a combined plan in the future. These seven councils cover almost half of New Zealand's population[2], so there are many people and organisations that will use these plan structures. The plan structures therefore need to be easy to follow and reduce unnecessary duplication. However, the draft planning standards had already provided a separate structure for all combined plans, so even without this change all combined plans would still have a nationally standardised structure.

The assessment below reflects this scale and significance.

2.2.5 Options considered

Under section 32(1)(b) of the RMA, reasonably practicable options for achieving the proposed objectives outlined must be identified and examined. The RMA does not define "reasonably practicable", but may include options that:

- are both regulatory and non-regulatory
- are targeted towards achieving the goal/objective
- are within the Ministry for the Environment's resources, duties and powers
- represent a reasonable range of possible alternatives.

For each potential option an evaluation has been undertaken relating to the costs and benefits to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the approach, and whether it is the most appropriate way to achieve the relevant objective(s). The options considered in this assessment are:

Option 1 – One plan structure for all combined plans

This was the option presented in the draft Combined Plan Structure Standard. All combined plans must include the parts, headings, chapters and sections in the order provided in the plan structure. Specific directions throughout the structure to state whether a particular part, heading, chapter or section is mandatory, or must be used if plan content exists, or another direction applies.

Option 2 – A separate plan structure for each of the four types of combined plan

This is the option included in the Combined Plan Structure Standard. Type 1 and type 2 combined plan structures are currently being used in New Zealand. Type 3 and type 4, which are not currently being used in New Zealand but could be used in theory, borrow parts from other relevant plan structures with directions about how to include these parts in the plan structure. Type 3 and type 4 structures essentially apply Option 3. However, because these types have their own directions about plan structure, they can be altered to reflect the needs of councils using them in the future.

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[2]   From Statistics NZ's subnational estimates for 2017: 2,258,700 resident population out of 4,793,700 people in New Zealand.

Option 3 – Combined plans staple together the plan structures for each type of plan used

This option requires combined plans to contain all the parts that apply to each of the policy statement and plan types used, however the Introduction and General Provisions and the Appendices and Maps chapters do not need to be repeated.

The types of plans used (regional policy statement, regional plan, district plan) determine which parts (and the directions within those parts) the council must include in that combined plan.

For example, a combined regional policy statement–regional plan–district plan would be required to have the following structure:

Introduction and General Provisions (standard for all plan types)	
Parts from the regional policy statement structure	Resource management overview
	Domains and topics
	Evaluation and monitoring
Parts from the regional plan structure	Management of resources
Parts from the district plan structure	District-wide matters
	Area-specific matters
Appendices and Maps (standard for all plan types)	

2.2.6 Options evaluation

The table below assess the costs, benefits, efficiency and effectiveness of the options considered against the objectives of the planning standards. Costs, benefits, efficiency and effectiveness that apply to all the options below are not included as this is not useful for options comparison.

Table 7: Options analysis for combined plan structures

Planning standards objectives	
Objective 1: An appropriate level of standardisation is achieved for matters that don't need local variation: • avoids duplication of effort • ensures that only matters that do not need local input are included in the standard • standardises how national direction is represented and implemented in plans • results in standards where the effort put in by councils to implement the standards is commensurate with the level of standardisation achieved.	**Objective 2: Improve the accessibility and usability of plans:** • plans are easier to access • plans are easier to understand • electronic functionality is used to improve accessibility wherever possible.
Objective 3: Improve plan-making baseline performance: • shorter timeframes • less resource intensive • more focus on local outcomes • assists in good practice being adopted in a more timely manner.	**Objective 4: Implementation of the standards is practical and feasible, while taking into account the:** • resource intensity needed to implement the planning standards • capacity and capability of councils to implement the planning standards • efficiency of central government having ownership, associated ongoing responsibility and maintenance costs for this level of standard.

Option 1: One plan structure for all combined plans (the option included in the draft planning standards)		
All combined plans must include the parts, headings, chapters and sections in the order provided, with specific directions throughout the structure to state whether a particular part, heading, chapter or section is mandatory, or must be used if plan content exists, or another direction applies.	**Costs**	**Benefits**
	Councils • Councils need to decide how to split provisions across multiple parts, chapters and sections that may be suitable. This comes with a risk of legal challenge as to whether the council has done this correctly. • Regional policy statement provisions cannot be integrated as efficiently with related plan provisions when compared with Option 2. • Council plan structures are cumbersome to develop and change.	**Councils** Specific directions about when a part, chapter or section applies provides some certainty for councils on how to structure their combined plans. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** Future national direction can direct provisions to be located in specific chapters within a single combined plan structure, rather than having to consider how different combined plan structures need to interpret national direction.

	• Council plans are bulkier than Option 2. • Councils cannot effectively use integrated management principles to address issues that apply across domains, topics and plan types. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** As different councils select different options in combined plans, the Ministry needs to prepare more varied guidance, support implementation and compare and assess provisions across council plans. **Plan users/general public** • Combined plans may be cumbersome and repetitive in the number and naming of chapters and sections, which makes it difficult for plan users to navigate within the plan. • Plan users may miss relevant provisions that are in different or multiple places. • People who work across plans find a low level of consistency of structure among plans, making it more difficult to locate and compare provisions across plans in different districts and regions.	**Plan users/general public** Plan users who work across plans recognise the consistent titles and grouping of parts, headings, chapters and sections.
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness** Option 1 has a relatively low level of effectiveness. As councils select appropriate parts, chapters and sections from the combined plan standard, each combined plan is different. This means plans are not as easy to make and understand as they could be. Plans are longer and discourage integrated management across domains and topics.	**Efficiency** Option 1 has the lowest level of efficiency across the three options. The costs to councils are higher in deciding which parts, chapters and sections apply, and the risk of challenge to these choices, and the benefits are less with lower levels of standardisation, simplification and ease of use.
Overall evaluation	Option 1 is not the most appropriate to achieve the objectives because: • there is some duplication of provision, uncertainty of where provisions should go, and increased unnecessary variation between councils that use the same type of combined plan when compared to Options 2 and 3 (Objective 1) • Option 1 is more difficult for plan users to use than the other options, and plan users may miss relevant provisions that are in different or multiple places (Objective 2) • the choices inherent in Option 1, and consequent risk of legal challenges, is likely to make this option more resource intensive (Objective 3) • the variety across councils within the same type of combined plan reduces the ability for good practice to be adopted in a timely manner (Objective 3)	

	• the different interpretations of Option 1 increases the support required from central government, and an increased responsibility on councils to implement the plan structure effectively for their councils (Objective 4).

Option 2: A separate plan structure for each type of combined plan (the option included in the final planning standards)

The two types of combined plans currently being used have their own plan structure, and the two types that are unlikely to be used have a simple direction about how they must form their own plan structure.	Costs	Benefits
	Councils	**Councils**
	The degree of choice that councils can exercise when placing provisions within a combined plan is low.	• Plan structures are designed for the type of combined plan that councils have, and the chapter structure is more streamlined, so there is no need to repeat similar content in different chapters.
	Ministry for the Environment, and central government	• Councils can more efficiently and effectively use integrated management principles to incorporate regional policy statement provisions across the plan, and to address issues that apply across domains, topics and plan types.
	• The Ministry has more plan structures it must maintain and update over time.	• ePlans can be pre-set to the specific plan structure used by a council, so they are less costly for councils.
	• Inconsistencies between the combined plan structures, and between combined plan structure and other plan structures, are more likely to develop than for Option 3.	• Councils that want to merge their plans have a more appropriate pre-set plan structure for their needs than provided by Options 1 and 3.
	Plan users/general public	**Ministry for the Environment, and central government**
	None identified for this option.	• Future updates to this planning standard can be applied to target the specific types of combined plan being used by councils.
		• The Ministry can compare 'like with like' when assessing how councils are complying with the combined plan standard.
		• The Ministry can give more specific guidance and implementation assistance on each of the plan structures provided.
		Plan users/general public
		• The public can quickly become accustomed to navigating their plan, given the fewer number of chapters and less duplication.
		• People who work across plans find a higher level of consistency of structure among plans, allowing comparison of provisions across plans in different districts and regions.

Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness**	**Efficiency**
	Option 2 has a relatively high level of effectiveness. As different types of combined plans have their own plan structure, the structure can be more prescriptive and more targeted to the needs of each plan. This means plans are easier to make and understand. Plans have less duplication of chapters and sections than the other two options. The plan structures enable more integrated management across domains, topics and plan types.	Option 2 has the highest level of efficiency across the three options. Increased certainty of locations for provisions and integration of provisions is likely to have lower costs in reshaping plans to the new structures, and less legal risk on its application. Councils, the Ministry and plan users accrue higher benefits through lower costs of implementation and updates over time.
Overall evaluation	Option 2 is considered the most appropriate as: • standardisation is targeted to the types of plans included in the combined plan, and unnecessary duplication is avoided (Objective 1) • this model is likely to be easiest to navigate and understand by the general public (Objective 2) • the greater degree of integrated management provided by Option 2 and the fewer number of chapters is likely to result in plan-making being less resource intensive and allow for good planning practice to occur (Objective 3) • the implementation of this option is more practical and coordinated than for Options 1 and 3, although central government will have additional plan structures to monitor, manage and update (Objective 4).	

Option 3: Combined plans attach together the plan structures for each type of plan used

This option requires combined plans to contain all the parts that apply to each of the policy statement and plan types used, however the Introduction and General Provisions and the Appendices and Maps chapters do not need to be repeated. The types of plans used (regional policy statement, regional plan, district plan) determine which parts (and the directions within those parts) the council must include in that combined plan.	**Costs**	**Benefits**
	Councils • This option generates the largest number of chapters and sections within combined plans, because content would need to be repeated across different parts, so would likely result in the bulky plans that are more resource-intensive to develop and use. • Provisions cannot be integrated, eg, a provision cannot be both a regional policy statement and regional provision in the way that Option 2 provides for, and so would need to be split, duplicated or as a minimum cross-referenced across the different parts of the combined plan. • Provisions in zones and other spatial layers that cross mean high-water springs may need to be replicated in regional plan chapters and district plan chapters. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** The Government's preference for fewer, more coordinated and integrated plans has less practical effect because the range of	**Councils** • Councils are more easily able to combine and separate different types of plans over time, and can apply different processes to each, eg, councils can clearly identify that the regional policy statement part of the plan cannot be altered through private plan changes. • ePlans can be pre-set to the plan structure or structures used by a council, so they are less costly for councils. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** • This option results in the fewest number of plan structures for the Ministry to review and keep up to date. • The Ministry can more easily assess how the planning standards are implemented between councils with combined plans and councils with regional or district plans, when compared with Options 1 and 2, because Option 3 uses the same parts, chapters and sections as required in stand-alone policy statements and plans.

	chapters and sections remains similar in combined plans compared to separate plans. **Plan users/general public** • Combined plans are more cumbersome and repetitive than Options 1 and 2 in the number and naming of chapters and sections, which make it difficult for plan users to navigate within the plan and to know which provisions are most relevant. • Plan users may miss important provisions that are in different or multiple places.	**Plan users/general public** Plan users who work across plans can easily locate and compare provisions in combined plans with provisions in other district or regional plans that they work with.
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness** Option 3 is most effective in standardising RMA plans and policy statements across New Zealand, but is not effective in streamlining and simplifying plans. While professional plan users are able to navigate and use this structure relatively effectively, the general public is more likely to struggle with the size and duplication.	**Efficiency** Option 3 has the medium level of efficiency across the three options. While the costs to the Ministry and to councils of creating and applying this option are lower, the benefits are also lower, as plans are longer, more detailed and less well-integrated, making them more difficult for the public to use.
Overall evaluation	This option is not the most appropriate to achieve the objectives because: • duplication or separation of provisions across the different types of plans will be required, although the level of standardisation across councils and standardisation of national direction implementation is highest out of all the options (Objective 1) • plans may be easier to understand by professionals who are familiar with different RMA plan types and how they function, but the general public are likely to struggle to access and understand how the different provisions apply to them (Objective 2) • provisions cannot be easily integrated across the regional policy statement, regional plan and district plan parts of the combined plan, although the consistency of Option 3 with other policy statement and plan structures means that timeframes and resources by the Ministry for the Environment and by councils moving to a combined plan are less than for the other two options (Objectives 3 and 4).	

2.2.7 Conclusion/summary of rationale for the preferred option

This evaluation has been undertaken in accordance with section 32AA of the RMA to identify the need, benefits, costs and the appropriateness of the proposal. This must be done having regard to its effectiveness and efficiency relative to other means in achieving the purpose of the RMA. The costs, benefits, efficiency and effectiveness outlined above is supported by submissions on the draft planning standards and from discussions with some affected submitters.

Option 1 is not a preferred option. It was opposed by a number of submitters, particularly strongly by the unitary councils that will have to use it. It has lower levels of certainty, higher risks of challenge, a more complex plan structure, and results in the lowest level of consistency across combined plans in New Zealand.

Option 3 is not a preferred option. It reverses the best practice approach of integrating provisions across parts and plan components. It discourages integration of provisions across plans, and across regional and district councils who join together to form a combined plan. Plans would end up being consistent across New Zealand, but at the expense of simplification and usability.

Option 2 is the preferred option. It was supported by most submitters who addressed the type of draft combined plan structure in their submissions. Staff from the five unitary councils that will use the type 1 'unitary' structure, along with officials from the Ministry for the Environment and Department of Conservation, agreed that this option is the most efficient and effective. It has higher levels of certainty, lower risks of challenge, a simpler plan structure, and results in greater levels of consistency across specific types of combined plans in New Zealand.

2.3 Rule Format

The rule tables and their associated directions have been removed from the planning standards and placed in guidance (in a revised form) as rules in plans are currently too diverse and an appropriate rule format for all plans could not be formulated in the time available.

2.3.1 Reasons for the change

As noted in detail in the recommendations on submissions report *2F Format Standard*, approximately 39 submissions were received on the draft rule tables (being a rule overview table, rule table and rule requirements table), most of which were from councils. Almost all of the submissions either opposed including rule tables or supported them if significant amendments were made and extensive testing was undertaken.

There was some support for some high-level principles that applied to rules as a result of using rule tables, ie, locating the activity status with the rule detail in the rule tables. However, the main area of concern was that some considered the tables would be difficult for plan users to read because they would become too long-winded and confusing. Many submissions mentioned the difficulty of trying to assess the implementation of the rule tables without content and time to undertake significant testing.

Although there was some support for the use of the rule format tables, in light of the weight of submissions raising concerns over how to integrate these into plans at this stage, the rule tables and their associated directions (with the exception of standardised abbreviations of activity status) have been removed from the first set of standards. The rule format tables have been moved into guidance, with some amendments (given the submissions that suggested specific improvements).

Two high-level principles conveyed in the rule tables are included as mandatory directions in the planning standards. These are:

- rules are to be ordered in the following way: permitted, controlled, restricted discretionary, discretionary, non-complying to prohibited
- any associated activity status and all relevant matters of control and/or discretion are to be located with the specific rule content.

2.3.2 Scale and significance

Section 32(1)(c) of the RMA states that a section 32AA evaluation must contain a level of detail that corresponds to the scale and significance of the effects of the proposal. It is considered that the planning standards as a package are of a large scale and of high significance. However, each individual standard will be of varying scale and significance.

The removal of the rule format tables from the planning standards is considered to be of a medium scale and significance. This is because standardising rule format in the planning standards could have had a high impact in plans but also potentially high cost and levels of risk if they were not entirely fit-for-purpose.

2.3.3 Options considered

Under section 32(1)(b) of the RMA, the Ministry must identify and examine reasonably practicable options for achieving the proposed objectives outlined. "Reasonably practicable" is not defined in the RMA, but may include options that:

- are both regulatory and non-regulatory

- are targeted towards achieving the goal/objective

- are within the Ministry's resources, duties and powers

- represent a reasonable range of possible alternatives.

For each potential option an evaluation has been undertaken relating to the costs and benefits to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the approach, and whether it is the most appropriate way to achieve the relevant objective(s). The options considered in this assessment are:

Option 1 - Continue to include refined rule format tables in the planning standards

- retain and refine high-level rule format principles as mandatory directions, in addition to rule format tables

Option 2 – Include rule format elements as mandatory directions and remove rule format tables from the planning standards

- include the rule format elements applied by previous inclusion of the rule tables in the standards as mandatory directions, such as:

  o mandatory requirement for councils to include rules in table form but not prescribe the actual format

  o mandatory inclusion of 'rule overview', 'rule' and 'rule requirements' tables in plans but not prescribing their actual format

  o mandatory use of the term 'rule requirement' only (not 'performance standards' or 'effects standards')

Option 3 – Include high-level rule format principles as mandatory directions and remove rule format tables from the planning standards

- include high-level rule format principles as mandatory directions

- refined rule tables provided to councils via guidance

- continue to work with councils and ePlan providers to develop a standardised way to draft and present rules in plans and evaluate whether the outcome can be incorporated into future standards.

2.3.4 Options evaluation

The table below asses the costs, benefits, efficiency and effectiveness of the options considered against the objectives of the planning standards.

Table 8: Options analysis for implementation of the National planning standards

Planning standards objectives	
Objective 1: An appropriate level of standardisation is achieved for matters that don't need local variation: • avoids duplication of effort • ensures that only matters that do not need local input are included in the standard • standardises how national direction is represented and implemented in plans • results in standards where the effort put in by councils to implement the standards is commensurate with the level of standardisation achieved.	**Objective 2: Improve the accessibility and usability of plans:** • plans are easier to access • plans are easier to understand • electronic functionality is used to improve accessibility wherever possible.
Objective 3: Improve plan-making baseline performance: • shorter timeframes • less resource intensive • more focus on local outcomes • assist in good practice being adopted in a more timely manner.	**Objective 4: Implementation of the standards is practical and feasible, while taking into account the:** • resource intensity needed to implement the planning standards • capacity and capability of councils to implement the planning standards • efficiency of central government having ownership, associated ongoing responsibility and maintenance costs for this level of standard.

Option 1: Continue to include rule format tables (refined as a result of submissions) in the planning standards		
Option 1: Continue to include rule format tables (refined as a result of submissions) in the planning standards. Retain and refine high-level rule format principles as mandatory directions, in addition to refined rule format tables.	**Costs**	**Benefits**
	Councils • Significant retro-fitting or re-drafting work required for councils where rules are very different to the standard rule format leading to increased implementation costs for councils. • Increased costs to councils who have invested in ePlan platforms that are not currently compatible with the rule format tables.	**Councils** • Reduced duplication of effort to decide what rule format to follow in plans. • Beneficial for councils that have a rule format that is close to the rule format tables. • Good practice in rule drafting is more easily transferable between councils. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** Increase in good practice on rule format in a timely manner.

	Ministry for the Environment, and central government • Increased cost in providing one-on-one implementation support on the use of mandatory rule tables. • Increased costs associated with developing comprehensive guidance to accompany the mandatory rule tables in standards. **Plan users/general public** If rule tables are not fit for purpose may not enable plan users to efficiently or clearly access rule information.	**Plan users/general public** • Plans will be easier to use and understand in an area where plan users mostly interact with plans. • Some improvements to online accessibility and usability of plans. • Contributors to multiple plans, such as iwi authorities and industry sector groups, will not have to duplicate efforts to understand and apply different rule formats of plan.
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness** Option 1 is somewhat effective as it means councils do not have to develop their own rule format. However the rule table may not be fit for purpose for all rule and plan types.	**Efficiency** • Option 1 is less efficient as the inclusion of rule format tables in the standards without sufficient testing to ensure they are fit for purpose could result in a duplication of effort. • Retrofitting existing rules into the prescribed format will be a difficult task, especially when coupled with the other changes required by the standards. • There is a high degree of variation in cost to councils to implement the rule format standard, depending on where they are in their plan review cycle, and how different the councils' current rule format is to the draft standard.
Overall evaluation	This option is not the most appropriate to achieve the objectives because, although: • duplication of effort is somewhat avoided as a rule format is prescribed by the standards (Objective 1) • plans are easier to access and understand (Objective 2) • good practice in rule drafting is better transferrable between councils leading to good practice being adopted faster (Objective 3) these are outweighed by: • the effort put in by some councils to implement the standards is not commensurate with the level of standardisation achieved (Objective 1) • the resource intensity needed to implement the standards with rule format tables will be high for councils and the Ministry (Objective 4) • capacity and capability of councils to implement the rule format for some councils is an issue (Objective 4) • it is less efficient for central government to have ownership and associated ongoing responsibility and maintenance costs for the standards, including rule format (Objective 4).	

Option 2: Include rule format elements as mandatory directions and remove rule format tables from the planning standards

Option 2 : Include rule format elements as mandatory directions and remove rule format tables from the planning standards	Costs	Benefits
• Include the rule format elements applied by previous inclusion of the rule tables in the standards as mandatory directions, such as: • Mandatory requirement for councils to include rules in table form but not prescribe the actual format. • Mandatory inclusion of 'rule overview', 'rule' and 'rule requirements' tables in plans but not prescribing their actual format. • Mandatory use of the term 'rule requirement' only (not 'performance standards' or 'effects standards').	**Councils** • Costs to councils to work out their own rule format that complies with standards directions when drafting plans. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** • More work needed to continue to work on rule format elements to be applied as directions • Increased costs associated with developing comprehensive guidance to accompany the mandatory directions. **Plan users** If rule format elements are not fit for purpose they may complicate plans rather than simplify and may not enable plan users to efficiently or clearly access rule information.	**Councils** • Reduced duplication of effort to decide on some rule format elements to follow in plans. • Beneficial for councils that have the rule format elements that are close to those applied. • Good practice in rule drafting may be more easily transferable between councils. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** Will achieve some standardisation in rule format. **Plan users** Plans will be easier to use and understand in an area where plan users mostly interact with plans. Contributors to multiple plans, such as iwi authorities and industry sector groups, will not have to duplicate efforts to understand and apply different rule formats of plan.
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness** Option 2 is somewhat effective as it allow councils to develop their own rule format with more direction in the standards. However, the draft rule format elements were found to not be fit for purpose for all rule and plan types which could result in unintended costs and or consequences.	**Efficiency** Option 2 is less efficient than the inclusion of rule format elements without sufficient testing to ensure they are fit for purpose and could result in a duplication of effort. There is a high degree of variation in cost to councils to implement the rule format elements, depending on how different the councils current rule format is to the draft standard.
Overall evaluation	This option is not the most appropriate to achieve the objectives because, although: • duplication of effort is somewhat avoided as rule format elements are prescribed by the standards (Objective 1)	

- plans are easier to access and understand (Objective 2)
- it will assist in good practice being adopted (Objective 3)

these are outweighed by:

- the effort put in by some councils to implement the standards is not commensurate with the level of standardisation achieved (Objective 1)
- although the overall usability of all plans will take less time than Option 3 there may be unintended consequences of inappropriate rule format elements being included in the standards (Objective 2).

Option 3: Include high level rule format principles as mandatory directions and remove rule format tables from the planning standards		
Option 3: Include high-level rule format principles as mandatory directions and remove rule format tables from the planning standards. - Include high level rule format principles as mandatory directions. - Move an amended version of rule format tables to guidance. - Continue to work with councils and ePlan providers to develop a standardised way to draft and present rules in plans and evaluate whether the outcome can be incorporated into future standards.	**Costs** **Councils** Costs to councils to work out their own rule format when drafting plans. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** - Plan rules are aligned slower than Options 1 and 2, resulting in the current problems associated with inconsistencies in a key area of plans. - More work needed to continue to work on rule format. **Plan users** Delayed benefits of national standardisation for plan users compared with Options 1 and 2 resulting in current inefficiencies of the planning system continuing to impact on plan users.	**Benefits** **Councils** - Less cost as councils can choose a rule format that works for them. - Allows councils to focus on embedding other structure and format standards without the need to follow a prescribed rule format. - Allows for a more collaborative approach to development of a standardised rule format than Options 1 and 2. - Councils can assess how to implement good practice on rule format individually. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** - Allows more time to work with councils and ePlan providers to refine a workable rule format. - Will achieve some standardisation in rule format as basic rule principles are implemented. - Less immediate implementation support required to councils, however the commitment to implementation support will need to be sustained over a longer period than Option 1. **Plan users** Some improvements to rule format for plan users with basic principles applied in standards, particularly around keeping all rule information together.
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness** Option 3 is somewhat effective, as some standardisation of rule format will occur as more councils apply basic rule format principles. Councils	**Efficiency** Option 2 is considered to be more effective than Options 1 and 2. Including high-level rule format principles and the refined rule format tables in guidance is considered a more efficient use of the Ministry's

	will also hopefully consider guidance when they carry out a full review of their plan.	and councils' resources (both time and money) in an area of plans that is critical to standardise correctly.
	Standardisation is not forced on some councils with vastly different formats that may affect their effectiveness. However, as the rule format is not prescribed in the standards, standardisation may occur at a slower rate.	However, there are potential costs to plan users of continuing to operate in a planning system that has significant rule format variation, as the application of guidance is not mandatory.
Overall evaluation	Option 3 is considered the most appropriate as:	

- moving the rule tables into guidance is considered to achieve some level of standardisation with less duplication of effort and resources for councils (Objective 1)
- applying high-level mandatory directions within the standards (with supporting guidance) will create some consistency across plans rules and some enhanced plan usability (Objective 1)
- the overall usability of all plans will take longer to occur than Options 1 and 2 but there is less likelihood of unintended consequences involved in an inappropriate rule format being included (Objective 2)
- the implementation of Option 3 is more practical and feasible than Options 1 and 2; councils are more likely to have the capacity and capability to take up good practice in rule format in collaboration with the Ministry and ePlan providers as they carry out full plan review and develop their ePlans (Objective 4).

2.3.5 Conclusion/summary of rationale for the preferred option

This evaluation has been undertaken in accordance with section 32AA of the RMA to identify the need, benefits, costs and the appropriateness of the proposal. This must be done having regard to its effectiveness and efficiency relative to other means in achieving the purpose of the RMA.

Option 3 has the most benefit felt by councils and the Ministry, when compared to the other options. Moving the rule format tables to guidance and continuing to work with councils and ePlan providers to develop a rule format is considered to be the most efficient way of creating consistency across plan rules and enhancing plan usability. This will also avoid unintended consequences. It is envisaged that councils will develop more simplified rules as they draft more rules into ePlan. Councils will do this with the benefits of rule format guidance and collaborative relationships with ePlan providers.

The Ministry presented a general summary of submission on rule table format to the Minister, who agreed to remove rule format tables, and associated directions, from the planning standards (Option 3) with further agreement for:

- rules to continue to be located with high-order provisions (ie, objectives and policies)

- refined rule tables to be provided in guidance

- the Ministry continuing to work with councils and ePlan providers to develop a standardised way to draft and present rules in plans

- the evaluation of whether continued work on rule tables results in the tables being able to be incorporated into future standards.

2.4 Implementation Timeframes

The implementation timeframes for the planning standards have been amended to reduce the impact of implementing the standards on councils and plan users.

2.4.1 Reasons for the change

As noted in detail in the recommendations on submissions report *2M Implementation of the Standards*, implementation timeframes were the most highly submitted on issue of the planning standards.

Although submitters acknowledge the improvement in the draft standards timeframes from the status quo within the Act, many submitters said there was still not enough time. Many submitters also stated that the costs of the standards on councils and other participants in the system would be too high. Therefore, it was considered appropriate to look at other options to make the implementation timeframes less costly for councils and plan users while still achieving the objectives of the standards.

2.4.2 Quantification of benefits and costs

Section 32(2)(b) of the RMA requires that, where practicable, the benefits and costs of a proposal are to be quantified. The scale and significance of the proposed planning standards was considered to be high, and the Ministry commissioned an economic cost-benefit analysis of the draft planning standards.

The economic analysis carried out by Castalia confirmed the assumption that the cost-benefit ratio (BCR) of the standards increased with longer implementation timeframes. This is because longer timeframes mean councils can implement changes as part of their statutorily required plan review. This reduces the need to bring forward a review of their plan and reduces overall costs. The predicted overall BCR by implementation timeframe is shown in figure 2.

Figure 2: Cost-benefit ratio by implementation period per group of standards
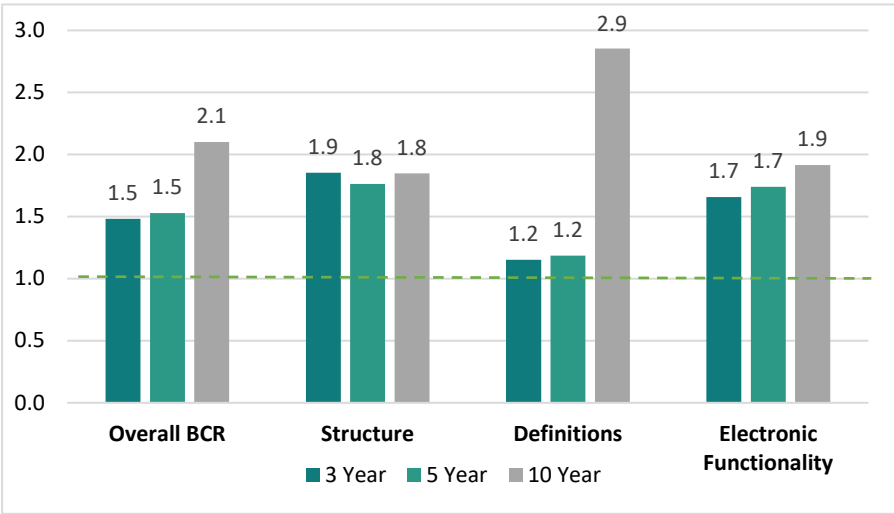
The report found that the implementation period has an effect on the BCR, but that the benefits outweigh costs for all three timeframes assessed. As figure 2 shows, it is the BCR of the definitions standard that benefits most from a longer implementation timeframe. This is because the implementation costs reduce much more relative to the reduced benefits of taking longer to implement the standards.

2.4.3 Benefits of completing implementation sooner than 10 years

The CBA clearly demonstrates that the benefits of the planning standards outweigh the costs. What the high-level CBA ratio does not convey however, is that the benefits are mainly felt by plan users, whereas the costs fall largely on councils (and therefore may have a flow-on effect on rates and ratepayers). The economic analysis considers options for reducing the impact of costs on local authorities by looking at different alternative timeframes. While longer implementation timeframes would reduce the cost burden for councils, they also significantly delay the benefits of the standards for plan users. There are a number of benefits to the implementation of as many of the standards as possible occurring before a 10-year timeframe.

As plan users are the main beneficiaries of faster implementation timeframes, a 10-year timeframe for implementation for all plans and standards would mean the existing costs associated with operating in a planning system with significant unnecessary variation would continue for longer. Any reduction from 10 years will reduce the associated costs.

As previously noted, the default timeframes within the Act set an expectation that all planning standards will be implemented within five years of gazettal. Although the one-year timeframe for mandatory directions may not be practically achievable for the reasons outlined above, a 10-year timeframe for all standards is well beyond the expectations established in legislation.

2.4.4 Individual detailed options considered

After submissions were received a number of individual nuancing options for the implementation of the planning standards were considered. Each option responds to issues raised by submitters.

The nuancing options considered and their pros and cons are outlined in the table below. The nuancing options chosen to be included in the preferred option (Option 2 of the overall options assessment in section 2.1.3 below) are shaded in the table.

Table 9: Individual nuancing options and their pros and cons

Option	Explanation	Advantages	Disadvantages
Option 1: Existing timeframes in draft Standards **Recommended to remain for district councils**	**1 year** for baseline eDelivery. **5 years** for all councils to implement all other standards except **7 years** for councils that have recently completed a plan review (councils that have notified the decisions version of a plan within three years of the planning standards being gazetted ie, between April 2016 and April 2019).	• Future content standards can still be implemented within a 5-7 year timeframe. • Plan structures align quickly and there early benefits for multiple plan users.	• Risk of perception of unfairness by giving extensions to some councils. • Many councils have to review their plan outside of schedule review. • May lead to rates increases to cope with extra demands. • May lead to councils making trade-offs between National Direction and choosing not to implement within the timeframes.
Option 2: Implement RPS first **Recommended**	Regional councils (not unitary councils) have: **1 year** for baseline eDelivery. **3 years** for regional policy statements. **10 years** for regional plans.	• Will allow most district and regional plans to more clearly give effect to the relevant RPS when implementing the standards. • RPSs have no rules, so there is less risk of content change triggering an RMA Schedule 1 process during Standards implementation. • Regional plans cover more resource management themes and are more diverse. Ten years allows more effective alignment of content to the planning standards over time. • Any planning system reform may catch up with the regional plan implementation of the standards. • Standards that are not working well can be corrected with less disadvantage.	• Regional councils could choose to take a decade to implement the Standard. • The benefits of the Standards will take longer to accrue. • Some regional coastal plans are already overdue for review. This timeframe may lead to further delay (however the requirement of the RMA to begin a review of all plan provisions within 10 years continues to apply).
Option 3: 7 years for preparing combined District Plans	**1 year** for baseline eDelivery. **7 years** for councils that notify a combined plan between April 2019 and April 2026 for all other standards.	• Recognises the process that these councils will be going through (some as a result of a decision of the local government commission). • Recognises the benefits of combining planning documents and encourages this practice. • Gives more lead-in time for councils to figure out how to work together and then to combine multiple plans.	• Benefits of national standardisation delayed.

Option	Explanation	Advantages	Disadvantages
Recommended	This would currently apply to Buller, Carterton, Grey, Masterton, South Wairarapa and West Coast Districts.	• Councils undertaking this option generally have low resources. Even when combined their resources are still relatively low compared urban councils.	
Option 4: 10 years for Auckland only **Not recommended**	**1 year** for baseline eDelivery. **10 years** for Auckland Council for all other standards.	• Recognises the additional pressures on the Auckland region from central government, Urban Development Authority etc. • Means the largest plan in the country does not need to be reviewed outside of the plan review cycle. • Reduces the costs to all involved in the AUP processes.	• Benefits of national standardisation delayed. • Future content standards may need to be adapted for Auckland until the standards are implemented.
Option 5: 10 years for all Unitary Councils **Recommended**	**1 year** for baseline eDelivery. **10 years** for unitary councils for all other standards**.**	• Regional and unitary plans face significant changes from national direction and central government policy. • There are a wide variety, range and number of regional and unitary plans. The degree of change needed for some of them to comply with the standards is high. • Recognises the additional pressures on the Auckland region from central government, Urban Development Authority etc. • Means the largest plan in the country does not need to be reviewed outside of the plan review cycle. • Reduces the costs to all involved in the AUP processes. • Recognises the volume of planning work at unitary councils.	• Benefits of national standardisation delayed. • Future content standards may need to be adapted for unitary councils until the standards are implemented.
Option 6: 10 years for councils with plans recently made operative **Not recommended**	**1 year** for baseline eDelivery. **7 years** for councils whose plan became operative within 3 years before the standards are gazetted (as well as plans that had decisions released).	• Gives recognition of the appeal process and the time and cost it involves. • Appeals are to some extent out of control of the council. • Would reduce the costs of the councils added to the 7 years.	• Some plans have taken a long time to become operative. • Would require the Ministry to make a judgement call on what is an appropriate timeframe in which a plan should be made operative. • Could be seen as unfair to councils who 'more actively manage' plan and or appeal processes. • Benefits of standards delayed.

Option	Explanation	Advantages	Disadvantages
Option 7: 10 years for small councils' ePlans **Recommended**	**10 years** for councils (which do not have a combined plan) with fewer than 15,000 residential ratepayers to meet the ePlan standard.	• Gives councils with small rating bases more time to gather the money and resources for an ePlan. • Reduces risk of rates rises in these areas. • The Wairarapa Councils have one plan that serves more than 15,000 ratepayers, and the West Coast Councils will be the same. The cost of their respective ePlans will be shared across the councils, so these councils are not included in this recommendation.	• These plans will not be as useable in the short term, however most of these councils can provide an appropriate level of service with PDF plans and counter inquires as their plan usage is often not high.
Option 8: No ePlans for small authorities **Recommended**	Exempt the Chathams Council, the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) and the Department of Conservation (DoC) as authorities for the Outer and Subantarctic Islands, from the ePlan standard.	• This would reduce the cost of producing plans for areas with very small population (Outer Islands 37, Chatham Island 640, and Subantarctic Islands 0).	• Councils may see DIA and DoC as having enough resources to fund an ePlan despite the very low population of the Outer and Subantarctic Islands.
Option 9: 2 extra years for definitions, or next notified proposed plan (whichever is earlier) **Recommended**	**7 or 9 years** for district councils to implement the definitions standard (an additional two years above the timeframe for the majority of the standards).	• Plans structure aligns more quickly. • Definitions being included at the next full plan review significantly reducing costs for councils. • The structure, form and zones being put in place would assist with any future content standards being able to be implemented more easily within a 5-7 year timeframe. • Contributors to multiple plans (iwi authorities, industry sector groups etc.) can space out submission workloads. • The Government is assured that national standardisation will not take longer than necessary. • Greatly improves the benefit cost ratio (BCR) of the standards as the definitions have a BCR of 2.9 at 10 years but only 1.2 at 3 and 5 years. • Still allows councils to implement all standards at once.	• Some councils could consider their plans once for structure and then again definitions.

2.4.5 Scale and significance

Section 32(1)(c) of the RMA states that a s32AA evaluation must contain a level of detail that corresponds to the scale and significance of the effects of the proposal. It is considered that the planning standards as a package are of a large scale and of high significance. However, each individual standard will be of varying scale and significance.

The implementation of the planning standards is considered to be of a large scale and high significance because of the affect that implementation will have on all councils and many plan users around the country. This is reflected in the level of analysis contained in the following table.

2.4.6 Options considered

Under section 32(1)(b) of the RMA, the Ministry is required to identify and examine reasonably practicable options for achieving the proposed objectives outlined. "Reasonably practicable" is not defined in the RMA, but may include options that:

- are both regulatory and non-regulatory

- are targeted towards achieving the goal/objective

- are within the Ministry's resources, duties and powers

- represent a reasonable range of possible alternatives.

For each potential option an evaluation has been undertaken relating to the costs and benefits to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the approach, and whether it is the most appropriate way to achieve the relevant objective(s).

The four options assed in the following tables are:

Option 1 – Five years, plus two-year extension as needed

- A **one-year** deadline for baseline eDelivery standards.

- A **five-year** deadline for all councils to implement all other standards, except for a **seven-year** deadline offered to councils who have recently completed a plan review (councils that have notified the decisions version of a plan within three years of the planning standards being gazetted ie, between April 2016 and April 2019).

Option 2 – Nuanced Implementation timeframes

- A **one-year** deadline for baseline eDelivery standards.

- A **three-year** deadline for regional councils to update their Regional Policy Statement (RPS).

- A **five-year** deadline for district councils except for a seven-year deadline offered to district councils who have recently completed a plan review (councils that have notified the decisions version of a plan within three years of the planning standards being gazetted ie, between April 2016 and April 2019).

- A **seven-year** deadline for councils developing a combined district plan.

- A **seven or nine-year** deadline for district councils to implement the definitions standard (an additional two years above the timeframe for the majority of the standards).

- A **10-year** deadline for regional plans and unitary plans.

- A **10-year** deadline for small councils to develop an ePlan.

Option 3 – Seven-year deadline – for all councils and for all standards, except for baseline eDelivery standards, which have a one-year deadline.

Option 4 – Next plan review or 10-year overall deadline, whichever is sooner – for all councils and for all standards, except for baseline eDelivery standards, which have a one-year deadline.

2.4.7 Options evaluation

The table below asses the costs, benefits, efficiency and effectiveness of the options considered against the objectives of the planning standards.

Table 10: Options analysis for implementation of the National Planning Standards

Planning standards objectives	
Objective 1: An appropriate level of standardisation is achieved for matters that don't need local variation: • avoid duplication of effort • ensure that only matters that do not need local input are included in the standard • standardises how national direction is represented and implemented in plans • result in standards where the effort put in by councils to implement the standards is commensurate with the level of standardisation achieved	**Objective 2: Improve the accessibility and usability of plans:** • plans are easier to access • plans are easier to understand • electronic functionality is used to improve accessibility wherever possible.
Objective 3: Improve plan-making baseline performance: • shorter timeframes • less resource intensive • more focus on local outcomes • assist in good practice being adopted in a more timely manner.	**Objective 4: Implementation of the standards is practical and feasible, while taking into account the:** • resource intensity needed to implement the planning standards • capacity and capability of councils to implement the planning standards • efficiency of central government having ownership, associated ongoing responsibility and maintenance costs for this level of standard.

Option 1: Existing timeframes from the Draft Standards - Five years, plus two year extension as needed		
Option 1: Five years, plus two-year extension as needed • A **one-year** deadline for baseline eDelivery standards • A **five-year** deadline for all councils to implement all other standards, except for a **seven-year** deadline offered to councils who have recently completed a plan review (councils that have	**Costs**	**Benefits**
	Councils A number of councils are still likely to need to bring forward a full plan review, the amount is less than the RMA default timeframes, but more than all other options. **Ministry for the Environment** Ministry support is needed over a 5–7 year period.	**Councils** • Councils plans that have been made operative recently are given a further two years before standards are required to be implemented, reducing the impact of the implementation change compared to the RMA default timeframes. • Less risk of major recent plan reviews being reopened for further challenge soon after they were finalised than the RMA default timeframes.

notified the decisions version of a plan within three years of the planning standards being gazetted ie, between April 2016 and April 2019).	**Plan users/general public** There are still a large number of plan changes and reviews that will occur within the five-to-seven-year timeframe, which may be difficult for plan users to be involved with. However, this is a large improvement on the RMA default timeframes.	• Councils have more ability than the RMA default timeframes to budget and plan for a review within their long-term plan (LTP). • Comprehensive plan changes within these timeframes are more likely to be able to include provisions that give effect to the National Policy Statement (NPS) for Urban Development Capacity and the NPS Freshwater Management, than the RMA default timeframes leading to efficiency gains. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** • The Government is assured that national standardisation will still occur for the majority of councils within the five-year anticipated by the legislation. • Supporting councils will be easier than the RMA default timeframes, however the commitment to implementation will be over a longer period. **Plan users/general public** • Some improvements to online accessibility and usability of plans occur quickly, and the transition to ePlans still occurs within five years for most councils. • Contributors to multiple plans (iwi authorities, industry sector groups, etc) will not have to duplicate efforts on separate plan changes or updates for the same plan.
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness** This option is somewhat effective as it provides a choice for councils in how they approach the implementation of all the standards in their plans, however it gives them the least time of all options. Many councils are likely to undertake a comprehensive review of their plan as a result, producing plans that are easy to use, workable and effective, however some will not be able to make this work.	**Efficiency** Option 1 is fairly efficient as many councils will be able to carry out a full plan review either as planned or in close proximity to when one is planned, however some councils will have to do this three years early, which has a high cost. This option recognises that some councils have recently operative plans and provides a further two years helping to bring the required implementation of the standards closer to the time they are due for a review, reducing the cost impacts on those councils. This option will see a majority of councils implement their plans within the overall time period anticipated by the legislation (five years).
Overall evaluation	This option is not the most appropriate to achieve the objectives because, although: • the level of standardisation achieved within the timeframes will be significant and duplication of effort will be minimised (Objective 1)	

- the overall usability of all plans will be increased more quickly than all other options and there is less likelihood of unintended consequences than the default timeframes of the RMA (Objective 2)

- most councils carrying out a full review will assist with the adoption of best practice (Objective 3)

these are outweighed by:

- the implementation of this option is the least practical and feasible of all of the options; councils will be less likely to have the capacity and capability to carry out the changes (Objective 4).

Option 2: Nuanced Implementation timeframes

Option 2: Nuanced Implementation timeframes	Costs	Benefits
- A **one-year** deadline for baseline eDelivery standards. - A **three-year** deadline for regional councils to update their Regional Policy Statement (RPS). - A **five-year** deadline for district councils except for a seven-year deadline offered to district councils who have recently completed a plan review (councils that have notified the decisions version of a plan within three years of the planning standards being gazetted ie, between April 2016 and April 2019). - A **seven-year** deadline for councils developing a combined district plan. - A **seven or nine-years** deadline for district councils to implement the definitions standard (an additional two years above the timeframe for the majority of the standards). - A **10-year** deadline for regional plans and unitary plans.	**Councils** Some of the planning standards, particularly electronic accessibility and functionality, may become out of date and require updates before all councils have completed implementation. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** Plans are aligned more slowly than Option 1 and in some cases Option 3, resulting in the current problems associated with ineffective implementation of national direction continuing. **Plan users** - Standardisation of plans is slower to be achieved than Options 1. - Delayed benefits of national standardisation for plan users compared with the Option 1, resulting in current inefficiencies of the planning system continuing to impact on plan users. **Plan users** Contributors to multiple plans (iwi authorities, industry sector groups, etc) may have to contribute to separate plan changes or updates for the same plan.	**Councils** - Most councils can use existing allocated resources to align planning standards changes with upcoming RMA plan changes, or will at least have more time to run specific plan changes. - The cost to councils of implementing the standards will be less than Option 1 and, in some cases, Option 3 (for regional and unitary council plans and some district plan definitions). - Councils can implement the standards when next practicable: as part of a full plan review, as one stage of a rolling review, or as a separate plan change. - District and regional plans are more likely than all other options to have an up-to-date RPS when they carry out their District Plan review. - District councils have more time than Options 1 and, in some cases, Option 3 to implement the definitions standard which they have noted will take a lot of resourcing. - Councils have the ability to budget and plan for a review within their Long Term Plan (more so than Option 1). - In many cases plan content can be prepared to align with the planning standards, rather than having to retrofit existing content. - Comprehensive plan changes within these timeframes are more likely (than the default timeframes of the RMA and Option 1) to be able to include provisions that give effect to the National Policy Statement (NPS) for Urban Development Capacity and the NPS Freshwater Management and any new national direction, leading to efficiency gains.

		• Small councils have more time than the default timeframes of the RMA and Option 1, to budget for the cost of an ePlan.
• A **10-year** deadline for small councils to develop an ePlan. • EPlan **exemptions** for plans serving very few residents.		• Plan servicing a very small population do not have to pay for an ePlan that would not be highly used.
		Ministry for the Environment, and central government Reduced cost to the Ministry to support implementation, as the majority of councils will be able to implement the standards within their budgeted next plan review. However, the commitment to implementation support will need to be sustained over a longer period than Option 1.
		Plan users • Some improvements to online accessibility and usability of plans occur quickly. • Contributors to multiple plans (iwi authorities, industry sector groups, etc) will have more time to respond to plan changes or updates for policy statements and plans as they will be more spread out than the default timeframes of the RMA and Option 1.
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness** This option is considered effective as standardisation will occur in a staged manner with the standardisation of RPSs sooner than any other option. When plans are produced, plan usability is good as the vast majority will be amended via a full plan review.	**Efficiency** This change is considered to be more cost effective than the status quo and Option 1. Most councils will be able to carry out a full plan review either as planned or in close proximity to when one is planned (at the most three years early). However, RPSs will have to be amended sooner which will have a cost. The cost to plan users of continuing to operate in a planning system that has significant variation until all plans are updated will continue for longer, leading to inefficiencies continuing. This option recognises that some district councils have recent operative plans and provides a further two years, helping to bring the required implementation of the standards closer to the time they are due for a review, thus reducing the cost impacts on those councils. This option also provides two additional years for district councils to implement the definitions standard so that they have the option of making changes for some standards before a full plan review but saving the definitions for this review if necessary.

		This option is efficient in that small councils have longer to fund ePlans and tiny councils do not have to meet the ePlan requirements.
Overall evaluation	This option is considered the most appropriate as: • the level of standardisation achieved in the timeframes will be significant (with some standardisation happening within three years) and duplication of effort will be avoided (Objective 1) • the overall usability of all plans will take longer to occur than Option 1 but there is less likelihood of unintended consequences than the default timeframes of the RMA or Option 1 (Objective 2) • the usability of all plans will take longer to occur than Option 1 but RPSs are standardised within three years which means most district and regional plans can take any changes to an RPS into account (Objective 2) • carrying out a full review will assist with the adoption of best practice and reduce the risk of unintended outcomes of plan provisions (Objective 3) • the implementation of this option is more practical and feasible than the default timeframes of the RMA and Option 1; councils are more likely to have the capacity and capability to carry out the changes (Objective 4).	

Option 3: Seven-year deadline

Option 3: Seven years	**Costs**	**Benefits**
• A **seven-year** deadline for all councils to implement all standards, except for baseline eDelivery standards, which have a one-year deadline.	**Councils** • Some of the planning standards, particularly eDelivery, may become out of date and require updates before all councils have completed implementation. • Will require some councils such as Auckland Council to update their plan three years early causing high costs. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** • Plans are aligned slower than Options 1 and in some cases Option 2, resulting in the current problems associated with ineffective implementation of national direction continuing, and reducing the scope for other regulation to be adopted in plans that would seek to improve consistent environmental outcomes. **Plan users** • Standardisation of plans is slower to be achieved than Options 1 and, in some cases, Option 2. • Delayed benefits of national standardisation for plan users compared with Options 1 and, in some cases, Option 2 result	**Councils** • Many councils can use existing allocated resources to align planning standards changes with upcoming RMA plan changes, or at least have more time to run specific plan changes. • Councils can implement the standards when next practicable: as part of a full plan review, as one stage of a rolling review, or as a separate plan change. • Councils have the ability to budget and plan for a review within their LTP but less than Option 2 and in some cases Option 1. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** Reduced cost to the Ministry to support implementation, as the majority of councils will be able to implement the standards within their budgeted next plan review. However, the commitment to implementation support will need to be sustained over a longer period than Option 1. **Plan users** Contributors to multiple plans (iwi authorities, industry sector groups, etc) will have more time to respond to plan changes or updates for policy statements

	in current inefficiencies of the planning system continuing to impact on plan users.	and plans as they will be more spread out than the default timeframes of the RMA and Option 1.
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness** This option is somewhat effective as it provides a choice for councils in how they approach the implementation of all the standards in their plans, however the hierarchy of plans will not be as effective as in Option 2. When plans are produced however, plan usability is good as the vast majority will be amended via a full plan review.	**Efficiency** This change is considered to be more cost effective than the status quo and Option 1. Many councils will be able to carry out a full plan review either as planned or in close proximity to when one is planned (at the most three years early, with notable exclusions such as Auckland Council). However, the cost to plan users of continuing to operate in a planning system that has significant variation will continue for longer than was anticipated by the legislation and Option 1, leading to inefficiencies continuing.
Overall evaluation	This option is not the most appropriate to achieve the objectives because, although: • the level of standardisation achieved in the timeframes will be significant and duplication of effort will be avoided (Objective 1) • carrying out a full review will assist with the adoption of best practice and reduce the risk of unintended outcomes of plan provisions (Objective 3) • the usability of all plans will improve faster than Option 2 and, in some cases, Option 3 (Objective 2) these are outweighed by: • the implementation of this option is more practical and feasible (than the default timeframes of the RMA and Option 1); but less so than Option 2 which nuisances timeframes and responds to particular issues of councils (Objective 4) • plan-making baseline performance will take longer to improve (Objective 3).	

Option 4: Next plan review (or by 2029 at latest)		
Option 4: Next plan review	**Costs**	**Benefits**
• Councils incorporate the planning standards into their next full plan reviews or **10 years at the latest.**	**Councils** There are considered to be no additional costs to councils as a result of the standards under this option as plans can be amended to meet the requirements at an already predetermined plan review. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** Plans are aligned slower than Options 1–3, resulting in the current problems associated with ineffective implementation of national direction continuing, and reducing the scope for other regulation to be adopted in plans that would seek to improve consistent environmental outcomes.	**Councils** • Resources required to amend plans are already allocated as part of plan reviews under LTP rounds. • Plan content can be prepared to align with the planning standards, rather than having to retrofit existing content. **Ministry for the Environment, and central government** Reduces the need for Ministry support, as the need is spread over longer timeframes. However, the commitment to implementation support will need to be sustained over a very longer period which may be difficult to sustain as priorities change.

	Plan users	**Plan users**
	Plan users have a significant wait for the benefits of the planning standards being realised. The costs associated with operating in a planning system with significant unnecessary variation in plans will continue.	Contributors to multiple plans (iwi authorities, industry sector groups, etc) will not have to duplicate efforts on separate plan changes or updates for the same plan.
Effectiveness and efficiency	**Effectiveness** Plan usability would eventually be good under this option as councils have had sufficient time to implement the changes in a comprehensive manner.	**Efficiency** This option reflects and efficient use of councils' resources to implement the planning standards but does not produce the benefits of the standards in an efficient timeframe. The efficiency for plan users is adversely affected as a result. Under this option all councils should be able to meet the deadline for implementation. However, inefficiencies in the planning system will continue for longer, including the cost to plan users operating in a planning system that has significant variation. These inefficiencies will continue for significantly longer than was anticipated by the legislation.
Overall evaluation	This option is not the appropriate approach to achieve the objectives because, although: • good level of standardisation is achieved and duplication of effort is avoided (Objective 1) • the implementation of this option is practical and feasible. Councils are likely to have the capacity and capability to carry out the changes (Objective 4). these are outweighed by: • the usability of all plans will take longer to occur than options 1, 2 and 3 (Objective 2) • plan-making baseline performance will take longer to improve (Objective 3) • some councils may delay the implementation of the standards out to 10 years if the option is available; therefore, a meaningful level of standardisation will take longer to occur.	

# 2.4.8 Conclusion/summary of rationale for the preferred option

This evaluation has been undertaken in accordance with section 32AA of the RMA to identify the need, benefits, costs and the appropriateness of the proposal. This must be done having regard to its effectiveness and efficiency relative to other means in achieving the purpose of the RMA.

The Ministry presented a range of options for implementation timeframes to the Minister, who concluded that a more nuanced approach (Option 2) than was originally proposed in the draft standards (Option 1) was appropriate.

The implementation timeframes proposed for the first set of standards (as represented by Option 2) are:

- a **one-year** deadline for baseline electronic accessibility and functionality standards

- a **three-year** deadline for regional councils to update their regional policy statement (RPS)

- a **five-year** deadline for district councils except for a seven-year deadline offered to district councils who have recently completed a plan review (councils that have notified the decisions version of a plan within three years of the planning standards being gazetted ie, between April 2016 and April 2019)

- a **seven-year** deadline for councils developing a combined district plan

- a **seven or nine-years** deadline for district councils to implement the definitions standard (an additional two years above the timeframe for the majority of the standards)

- a **10-year** deadline for regional plans and unitary plans

- a **10-year** deadline for small councils to develop an ePlan

- ePlan **exemptions** for plans serving very few residents.

Figure 3: Implementation timeframes
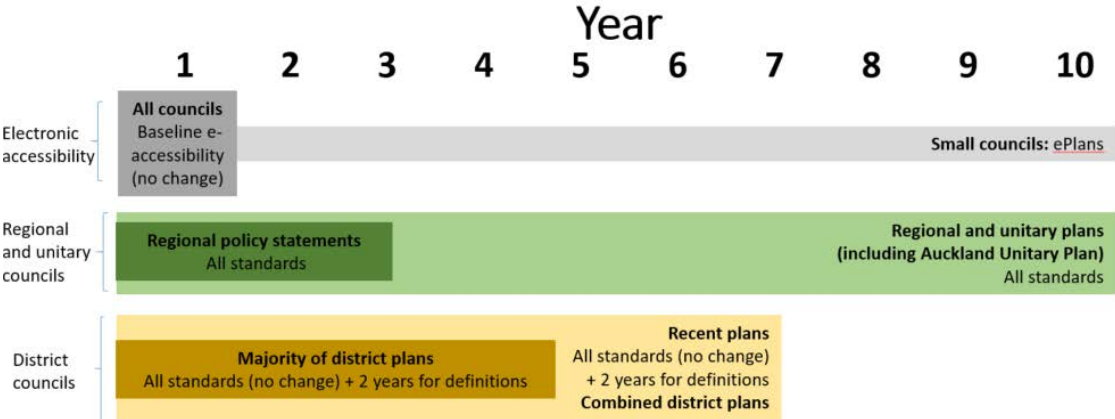
The chosen timeframes as represented by Option 2 are considered to further enhance the draft timeframes and to reflect the current workload of local government. This option is considered to make an appropriate trade-off between where the costs fall and the Government's preference to reduce plan users' costs as quickly as practicable, while also managing the cost impacts on local government.

Basic electronic accessibility and functionality requirements (one year)

Improving the online functionality, accessibility and usability of RMA plans gives 'quick-win' efficiency gains for plan users and improves national collation and comparison of plan data. The extent of work required to meet this standard will depend on the quality of the plan a council already has. Most councils with PDF plans will likely need to make some changes. However these standards would not be overly onerous to implement, would not affect plan content, and would not have a significant flow-on effect on plan structure and format. The Ministry expects these requirements can, in most cases, be met through existing council resources. Therefore, the proposed implementation of these standards is within one year from gazettal ie, by April 2020.

District Plans most standards (five or seven years)

An overall timeframe of five years from gazettal for district councils to implement most standards (apart from the basic ePlanning and definitions standards), and an extension of two years for councils who have recently completed a plan review, is efficient. This option provides a balance between not protracting the implementation of the standard and therefore seeing benefits sooner, and not forcing councils to complete their plan changes several years inside of their current plan review programmes.

The majority of councils will be able to use resources that are already allocated to amend plans. This will reduce potential additional cost burdens, as these can be implemented with a full plan review (or rolling reviews if still desired by the council).

District councils developing a combined plan (seven years)

A timeframe of seven years from gazettal for district councils who develop combined plans under s80(3)-(6). To be considered under this timeframe there must be a council resolution, Memorandum of Understanding or a similar statutory obligation.

This option recognises that councils going through joint council processes to merge multiple RMA plans generally need more time. It also promotes the long-term efficiency of combined plans. Currently this timeframe applies to the Wairarapa (Carterton, Masterton and South Wairarapa District Councils) and West Coast (Buller, Grey and Westland District Councils).

District Councils implementing definitions (seven or nine years)

An additional two years above the timeframe for the majority of the standards for district councils to implement the definitions standards. This reflects that many councils consider that a full Schedule One RMA process will be required to implement the definitions (because they consider their ability to carry out consequential amendments to be narrow). All other standards and their consequential changes either will not need a Schedule One process, or the scope of the process will be limited (eg, zones).

Councils expressed that implementing the definitions standard will be the most time consuming of all the standards as identifying all of the flow-on effects from a change to a definition will be resource intensive.

Regional councils already have 10 years to incorporate definitions into a plan review (as per above).

Requiring new plans to incorporate the new definitions ensures early implementation where this is efficient.

Regional policy statements (three years) and regional and unitary plans (10 years)

Requiring regional councils to amend their RPSs within three years to implement the standards, but giving them 10 years to update their regional plans. This recognises that district and regional plans must give effect to RPSs. This is easier if RPSs are already aligned with the standards (especially the definitions).

RPSs can be amended more quickly than other plans as they are generally lengthy and complex and do not include rules.

Allowing 10 years for regional plans recognises that regional and unitary plans face significant work to implement national direction. There is also a wide variety, range and number of regional and unitary plans. The degree of change needed for some of them to comply with the standards is high.

Giving unitary plans 10 years to be updated recognises their complexity and the investment in all of them, but especially the Auckland Unitary Plan.

Small councils ePlans (10 years)

Gives district councils with plans serving fewer than 15,000[3] residential ratepayers (Appendix 2) 10 years to implement level 5 ePlan requirements, excluding councils preparing combined district plans.

These councils have low ratepayer bases, often have a lack of ePlanning and GIS expertise available, and also have low RMA plan use. This options allows more time for broadband-speed uptake in rural areas and small communities and gives these councils more time to fund ePlans.

Very small councils exempt from ePlans

Exempt the Outer Islands (DIA and DoC-managed) Subantarctic Islands and Chatham Islands from the ePlan level 5 standard. This option recognises the very small populations (Outer Islands 37, Chatham Islands 640 and the Subantarctic Islands 0) and limited plan use in these areas. It also recognises that these plans can be quickly read and understood.

2.4.9 Implementation support

The Ministry intends to provide a package of implementation support for councils during the implementation period. This will include guidance, workshops and one-on-one council support where deemed necessary. The Ministry will prioritise action to ensure the implementation of the standards results in the greatest possible impact.

The Ministry will stay in close contact with councils, and monitor the uptake of the standards and assess implementation needs over implementation timeframes.

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[3] Both the Wairarapa and West Coast Councils are preparing or have a combined plan. These serve more than 15,000 ratepayers. The cost of these ePlans will be shared across the councils, so they are excluded from this extension. The councils given 10 years are Central Hawke's Bay District, Central Otago District, Clutha District, Gore District, Hauraki District, Hurunui District, Kawerau District, Kaikoura District, Mackenzie District, Manawatu District, Matamata-Piako District, Opotiki District, Otorohanga District, Rangitikei District, Ruapehu District, South Taranaki District, South Waikato District, Stratford District, Tararua District, Waimate District, Wairoa District, Waitaki District and Waitomo District.