



# The New Planning System

## *Making it easier to build and renovate your home*

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### A simpler way to build and renovate

New Zealand's new planning system will make it easier to build the houses and infrastructure our country needs, let farmers and growers get on with doing what they do best, and boost our primary sector while protecting the environment.

The Government is changing the rules to make it easier for people to build or make changes to their homes. The new planning system aims to help more homes get built, while protecting the environment and the things that matter most to communities.

### Two new Bills with clear roles

The new planning system is set out in two new Bills. Once passed, these will replace the current Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA):

- **The Planning Bill** lays out the framework for how land can be used and developed.
- **The Natural Environment Bill** is focused on managing the use of natural resources and protecting the environment.

**The new planning system is made up of more than just new Bills.** National instruments – including national policy directions and standards – will provide specific requirements for councils to develop their plans and make consenting decisions. The new planning system will include helpful changes made under recent changes to the RMA.

This will mean that homeowners can do more on their property without needing a consent and when a consent is needed the process will be clearer and more certain.

## Making it easier to do projects on your home

- The new planning system will support the Kiwi dream of improving your home or building a new one without unnecessary cost or delay. It will make it simpler and faster for homeowners to do things like renovate your house, build a deck or garage or add another storey – often without the need for a resource consent.
- There will be simple and consistent rules that make it easier to renovate, extend or build, with fewer consents needed for everyday projects. Councils will mostly have to use nationally standardised rules and zones – so it's easier to understand what you can do on your property.
- You'll be able to do more on your property without a consent, and when you do need one, it'll be easier and cheaper to get.
- You may be eligible for 'relief' if specific planning rules have a big impact on your land – so you're not unfairly disadvantaged.

## Consistent rules across the country

New standardised zones mean the same basic rules apply across most of the country, so it will be clear what you are allowed to do on your property, regardless of where you live.

These zones will set out rules about how high you can build, how much of your land your project can cover, as well things like height, noise, vibration and sunlight. They also mean it will be easier to use the same house plans across different parts of the country.

## Less consents and more flexibility for homeowners

More types of building and renovation activities will be allowed by default, so you can do more with your property without needing council approval. There will be less things councils can consider when making planning decisions. That means:

- you won't need consent for things that only affect your own property, like the layout of your house, balconies or private outdoor space
- councils can't stop your project just because it affects someone's sense of amenity
- only impacts, like noise, shading or flood risk that affect neighbours or the wider area will matter for consents
- heritage protection will focus on places of genuine heritage value while giving families the flexibility to adapt their homes for modern life.

### **If you do need a consent, getting one will be easier, faster and less expensive.**

- There will be clear rules, and you'll know exactly what information you need to provide.
- Only people who are directly affected by a project can have a say.
- The public will only be notified about your project if the effects of it (the impacts like noise and shading) are more than minor.
- A new Planning Tribunal will be set up to help sort out disputes quickly and cheaply.

## Easier subdivision

The new planning system is designed to make it simpler to subdivide land as more types of subdivision will be allowed. There will still be safeguards to manage risks like flooding and ensure infrastructure you need is in place.

## Relief when some land use is restricted

You may be able to get 'relief', which means a form of support or compensation, if some planning controls or rules have a big impact on how you can use your land. This includes:

- land-based indigenous biodiversity and significant natural areas
- significant historic heritage, and sites of significance to Māori
- outstanding natural features and landscapes
- areas of high natural character within the coastal environment, wetlands, lakes and rivers and their margins.

Relief could include things like cash payments, lower rates, extra development rights, no-fee consents, or land swaps.

A new Planning Tribunal will be established, which can help if you and the council can't agree on what relief you should get.

## What happens next?

Before they become law, the public gets to have a say about the new Bills through select committee hearings in early 2026 – this is an opportunity to make improvements.

Once the Bills are in place, the next step is to confirm the national instruments needed to guide spatial planning. People will also get a chance to submit on this. There will be transitional arrangements for existing resource consent holders:

1. All consents under the RMA will be extended until at least mid-2031.
2. You can obtain a new consent under the transitional system from mid-2026.
3. A new National Policy Statement – Freshwater will be introduced by mid-2026, which will assist anyone who wishes to obtain a new consent early.

The first spatial plans are expected within a set period after the law is enacted. Government hopes to have the transitional system up and running in the middle of 2026, and the full system working by 2029.

For more information, visit [environment.govt.nz](https://environment.govt.nz).

