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Waikato Regional Council – Letter to be tabled for Plan Change 8, Natural Hazards

To: Hearing Panel for Plan Change 8, Natural Hazards, Rotorua Lakes Council Proposed District Plan.

Name of submitter: Waikato Regional Council

1. Waikato Regional Council (WRC) lodged a submission and further submission on Plan Change 8 (PC8) to the proposed Rotorua Lakes District Plan. WRC submitted on flooding, hazard mapping, acceptable risk, and objectives and policies. Our submissions sought the following outcomes:
 - a. Rewording of the definition of acceptable risk to replace “low” with “minor”.
 - b. To include explicit wording in objectives and policies SDNH-P1 and SDNH-O2, that enables and supports adaptation, including short, medium and long term planning responses to evolving natural hazard risk, and clarifying the role of statutory and non-statutory guidance (such as regional adaptation guidelines) in decision making.
 - c. Requiring risk assessments for all new developments regardless of flood depth, removing a threshold-based approach, and expanding the scope of risk assessments.
 - d. Clarifying the rationale for the chosen freeboard level.
 - e. The inclusion of velocity (water flow speed), in addition to flood depth, in the hazard framework to support flood risk assessment.
 - f. The inclusion of, or reference to, primary hazard zones in the District Plan to align with the Waikato Regional Policy Statement.
2. Following this, Rotorua Lakes Council (RLC) provided a s42A report addressing a number of WRC’s submission points. Upon reviewing the s42A and attached appendices, WRC staff are satisfied that:
 - a. Primary hazard zones have not been identified by the Waikato Regional Council as per HAZ-M2 in the Waikato Regional Policy Statement, and as such are not required to be considered any further through this plan change.

- b. It is standard practice for practitioners to incorporate both depth and velocity when assessing flood hazards. As such, WRC accepts RLC’s reasoning for not explicitly including velocity in NH-PA.
 - c. RLC’s reasoning for maintaining a 300mm depth threshold is accepted.
 - d. The final National Policy Statement for Natural Hazards (NPS- NH) does not include matters that were identified in the draft version of the NPS-NH which WRC sought alignment with.
3. WRC respectfully requests that the hearings panel consider the following relief sought by WRC:
- a. **SDNH-O2** - suggested re-wording “Land use, subdivision and development are resilient and adaptive to the current and future effects of climate change.”
 - I. We disagree with the s42A officer’s comment that the concept of resilience is sufficiently broad to encompass adaptive responses.
 - II. The National Adaptation Plan 2022¹ glossary defines resilience as “The capacity of interconnected social, economic and ecological systems to cope with a hazardous event, trend or disturbance, by responding or reorganising in ways that maintain their essential function, identity and structure. Resilience is a positive attribute when it allows systems to maintain their capacity to adapt, learn and/or transform.” This definition has a focus around the capacity to cope with risk and the ability to recover from an event.
 - III. The National Adaptation Plan defines Adaptation as “In human systems, the process of adjusting to actual or expected climate and its effects, to moderate harm or take advantage of beneficial opportunities. In natural systems, the process of adjusting to actual climate and its effects. Human intervention may help these systems to adjust to expected climate and its effects.” This has a focus around a systemic change to respond to anticipated and actual risk.
 - IV. Given that these two concepts/processes have distinct definitions, and one is not encompassed by the other, we recommend that the word “adaptive” be explicitly stated in objective SDNH-O2
 - V. A recent example of a plan which utilises both adapt and resilience in the same objective is the Wellington City District Plan² Objective SRCC-O3 as follows:

‘Land use, subdivision, and development:

 1. *Effectively manages to risks associated with climate change and sea level rise;*
 2. *Supports the City’s ability to adapt over time to the impacts of climate change and sea level rise; and*
 3. *Supports natural functioning ecosystems and processes to help build resilience into the natural and built environments.’*

¹ [Urutau, ka taurikura: Kia tū pakari a Aotearoa i ngā huringa āhuarangi | Adapt and thrive: Building a climate-resilient New Zealand](#)

² [2024 District Plan: Appeals Version - Wellington City 2024 District Plan: Appeals Version](#)

- b. **SDNH-P1** - Include a clause in SDNH-P1 that supports short (next few years), medium (decades) and long term (future generations) adaptation planning to address changing climate risk. Suggested additional wording: “Enable and support short, medium and long term adaptation planning approaches to manage changing climate risks, ensuring that planning decisions remain responsive to evolving hazard information and future climate scenarios”.
- I. Although RLC has no statutory obligation under the Resource Management Act 1991 to reference adaptation, including explicit adaptation planning provisions would strengthen the plan.
 - II. Omitting explicit reference to adaptation planning increases the risk that communities will face ongoing intolerable effects from natural hazards. When the consequences of natural hazards surpass the threshold of tolerable and become intolerable under a resilience framework, the next step is to implement adaptive pathways or undertake adaptation planning. We consider that if the suggested wording is incorporated into the Rotorua Lakes District Plan, it will enable RLC to undertake adaptation planning should risk thresholds be exceeded.

Conclusion

4. Given that WRC is in general support of a number of the s42 reporting officers’ recommendations, WRC does not consider it necessary to be heard at the hearing.
5. Should the hearings panel require clarification or wish to discuss the above matter further, please contact WRC via the address for service below.

Please note that should the Section 42A author for Rotorua Lakes Council change their position or recommendations on the above, WRC’s position outlined in this letter may be subject to change.

Should you have any queries regarding the content of this document please contact Brooke Swanson, Policy Advisor, Policy Implementation directly on (07) 859 0945 or by email Brooke.Swanson@waikatoregion.govt.nz.

Regards,



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