

Policy Planning Services

For Local Authorities

New Zealand's planning system is entering its most significant period of reform in three decades. The Planning Act and Natural Environment Act introduce National Direction and Regional Spatial Plans, Land Use Plans and Natural Environment Plans, creating new planning architecture.

For local authorities, managing this transition while continuing to administer current RMA plans, demands experienced policy planners, sound judgement and clear project leadership.

Our expertise

At Tonkin + Taylor, we work alongside council planning and policy teams to provide capacity, specialist expertise and project leadership across the full lifecycle of policy and plan development.

We understand the practical complexity councils face - maintaining business-as-usual under the current RMA framework while simultaneously preparing for a new legislative environment that requires new plan types, new processes and new approaches to community and iwi engagement.

Our planners, scientists, engineers and engagement specialists bring expert practical, on-the-ground support, from strategic advice on your transition programme, through plan drafting, evaluation reports, stakeholder engagement, hearings and decision-making.

We understand the environment within which councils operate and we know the outcomes councils needed. We also understand the timeframe pressures you are working within and bring the resourcing flexibility needed to deliver when you need it, with efficient value for money outcomes. Plus, many of our planners have held previous policy roles in councils and know implicitly how to slot straight into council teams, collaborate and produce outstanding work.



Our services

Boutique specialist services or a one stop shop

Navigating plan reform and transition

Helping councils respond strategically to New Zealand's evolving planning system, from policy development through to implementation:

- Strategic advice on emerging national policy
- Transition planning, gap analysis and implementation roadmaps
- Preparation of Regional Spatial Plans, Land Use Plans and Natural Environment Plans
- Programme management and technical leadership for plan-making processes

Evidence-based planning and policy advice

Combining planning, environmental and engineering expertise to support robust, defensible policy and planning outcomes:

- Policy and planning expertise across spatial, land use and natural environment matters
- Integrated environmental and engineering input, including urban design, infrastructure, coastal processes, natural hazards, biodiversity and climate resilience
- Options assessment, evaluation reporting and strategic analysis
- Independent peer review, quality assurance and process management services

Meaningful engagement and decision-making

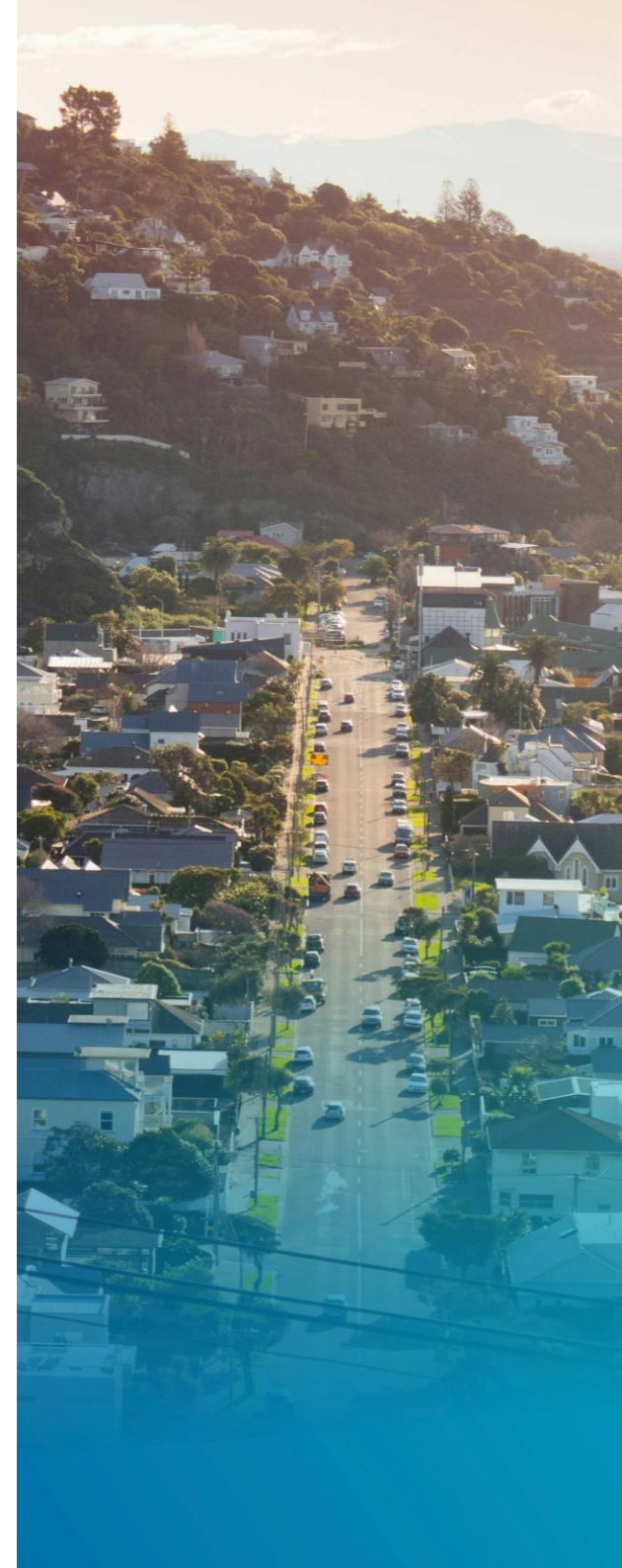
Designing and delivering engagement processes that build understanding, trust and support informed decision-making:

- Community, iwi and stakeholder engagement strategies
- Mana whenua partnership and engagement support
- Governance and elected member advice
- Facilitation of workshops, hearings and collaborative planning processes

Hearings, decisions and implementation

Supporting councils through the statutory process with clear advice, robust reporting and experienced hearing support:

- Hearing report preparation and expert planning advice
- Expert evidence, mediation and dispute resolution
- Commissioner and hearings panel support and reporting
- Certified hearing commissioners



Our track record

Examples of plan development and plan change projects led by our policy experts on behalf of Council clients include:

Wairarapa Combined District Plan¹

District Plan review

Our staff led preparation of the Wairarapa Combined District Plan through to the completion of the draft plan phase. This work included the development of chapters for complex and high public interest topics including natural hazards, network utilities, energy, historic heritage, commercial and industrial zones and strategic direction. Our policy specialists led policy research, engagement with stakeholders, direction of technical experts to inform plan drafting, and preparing and presenting draft plan chapters to the District Plan Review Joint Committee.

Ruapehu District Plan²

District Plan review

Our staff led project management and preparation of Ruapehu District Plan review project. This involved managing the full plan review process from the beginning of community consultation through to the resolution of references to the Environment Court. Activities included: coordinating community and stakeholder consultation; managing specialist assessments; preparing s32 and s32AA assessments; preparing the Draft District Plan (for consultation) and Proposed District Plan for Notification; supporting the submissions and further submissions process; attending hearings; preparing and notifying a Proposed District Plan (Decisions Version); managing appeals, including voluntary and Court directed mediation.

Queenstown Lakes District Plan

Proposed District Plan Appeals

Our staff assisted Queenstown Lakes District Council to resolve an Environment Court appeal concerning Chapter 38 of the Proposed District Plan (Open Space and Recreation Zones), relating to Queenstown Airport air noise contours. The appeal centred on noise and reverse sensitivity, specifically the appropriate treatment of activities sensitive to noise within the air noise contours, including consideration of the 'grandfathering' of existing provisions through the District Plan review. We also supported QLDC resolve an Environment Court appeal concerning Chapter 24 of the PDP (Wakatipu Basin Zone), relating to aircraft noise and amenity effects within the Basin. Our work has involved expert planning evidence, caucusing and mediation to successfully resolve both appeals through consent orders.

Auckland Council | Coastal Erosions Hazards Plan Change to the Auckland Unitary Plan

Our staff led the preparatory work for a future plan change to update the Auckland Unitary Plan definition of 'coastal erosion hazard area' with reference to new maps developed by T+T to illustrate areas susceptible to coastal erosion and instability. Includes consideration of national guidance and mapping scenarios, consultation and notification requirements, and s32 RMA requirements.

We also supported Auckland Council in relation to the down zoning of Hatfields Beach through PC120 to respond to flooding and inundation experienced during the Auckland Anniversary Weekend Floods in Cyclone Gabriel.

Whakatane District Plan review³

Network Utilities chapter

Our staff provided oversight of the preparation of the Network Utilities chapter of the Whakatane District Plan. This work involved overseeing the Chapter development from its beginnings in stakeholder engagement through to reporting and plan notification. Activities included: reviewing the Network Utilities chapter of the Draft District Plan and s32 RMA reporting; attending hearings and providing assistance to the hearing panel, including further drafting of plan provisions.

Rezoning of Te Rapa Racecourse

Hamilton City Council

On behalf of Hamilton City Council, T+T planners assessed a private plan change request to rezone part of the Te Rapa Racecourse to residential zoning. This included managing specialist inputs, presentation of evidence at the council hearing and working with the applicant and submitters to resolve issues.

¹ Our policy specialists Kate Searle and Alia Cederman held key planning roles on this project while working for another consultancy firm

² Our policy specialist Grant Eccles led this project while working for another consultancy firm

³ Our policy specialist Romae Calland led this project while working for another consultancy firm

Why choose us?

T+T help councils navigate complexity with confidence.

Our team has led district plan reviews, regional plan and policy statement projects, and council-initiated plan changes across New Zealand.

Our planners, scientists, engineers and engagement specialists work together to deliver practical, defensible and community-focused planning solutions, supporting councils from strategy and policy development through to hearings, decisions and implementation. We bring a track record for seamless integration in council teams.



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