



Applying for a Resource Consent or Permitted Boundary Activity

What does this guidance cover?

This guidance note will help you determine:

- Whether you may need a resource consent for your proposed activity, and how to apply; and
- The resource consent process; and
- Instances when you can apply for a permitted boundary activity, and how to apply.

Who should read this guidance?

This guidance is for anyone who is thinking of undertaking a new activity. By **activity** we mean any use or development of land, including subdivision, which is regulated by the District Plan and any discharge into the environment or use of water which is regulated by the Regional Plan. Because an activity is so broad, we recommend that you also have a conversation with one of our Council planners. They can help you navigate the District Plan to see what rules and standards (if any) apply to your proposed activity.

We recommend you read through this entire guide, as it contains important information that will help you understand more about the resource consent and permitted boundary activity processes, and when they might apply to your proposed activity.

What are resource consents and permitted boundary activities?

The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) requires district and regional councils to sustainably manage any effects of resource use and development on the environment.

A **resource consent** is permission from a district or regional council to undertake an activity that is regulated by a rule in a district or regional plan because the activity may have an adverse effect on the environment (which includes people).

A resource consent can be granted or declined by council following its consideration of a resource consent application against criteria listed in the RMA. The RMA directs what information should be



included in the application to assist the Council consider the criteria listed in the Act when it makes a decision to grant or decline consent. This information will include, but is not limited to, a description of the proposed activity, a description of the site, an assessment of the effects of the activity, an assessment of the activity against the provisions of any relevant plans or standards and a set of relevant plans or drawings.

Instances when you will require a resource consent, and what you need to do to apply, are explained below.

When do I need resource consent?

You will need a resource consent if your proposed activity does not comply with one or more rules in the district or regional plan.

Where an activity infringes a rule in a district or regional plan this changes the **activity status** of the activity. There are six categories of activity status, four of which require resource consent:

- i. A **permitted** activity can be carried out *without resource consent* as long as it complies with any requirements and standards specified in the district or regional plan.
- ii. A **controlled** activity requires resource consent and *must* be granted by council. Council may impose conditions of consent to help manage adverse effects, but council cannot decline consent
- iii. A **restricted discretionary** activity requires resource consent and the council exercises its discretion in deciding whether to grant or decline consent. Council's discretion is restricted to the matters listed in the district or regional plan, and council may impose conditions.
- iv. A **discretionary** activity requires resource consent and council may exercise its full discretion when deciding whether to grant or decline consent and any conditions it imposes.
- v. A **non-complying** activity requires resource consent and will only be granted if it can be shown that the activity is not contrary to the objectives and policies of the plan *or* that the adverse effects on the environment are minor.
- vi. **Prohibited** activities cannot be carried out because *resource consent cannot be applied for or granted*.

Each district administered by a district council is divided into areas called **zones**, each with its own set of rules e.g. residential zones, rural zones, commercial zones. An activity will be permitted in a zone that best suits the nature of the activity and is expected to occur, for example a factory in an industrial zone. Alternatively, an activity may not be expected in a zone, or may have potential effects that do not help achieve the outcomes of the zone, such as a factory in a residential area. In those instances, resource consent is normally required.

Whether you need a resource consent or not, you will still need to check with council whether other kinds of consents are required for your activity e.g. a building consent. This can be discussed in a **pre-application meeting** with council.

District plans deal with land use and subdivision. Regional Plans deal with matters such as discharges into the environment, the use of water take and activities in the coastal marine area. You will also need to check whether you need resource consent under the regional plan administered by the regional council.

District and regional plans can be found online or at council offices and libraries if you would like to check for yourself. District plans include guides to help you navigate your way through the rules, but if you need assistance then we recommend seeking the help and advice of Council's planning team.

How do I apply for a resource consent?

Once you have identified that you need to apply for resource consent we recommend discussing your proposal with a council officer. The officer will help you to understand what information is required to support your application and who else you might like to talk to, for example, any of your neighbours that may be affected.

Step 1. Preparing an Application

There are a number of important parts that make up a complete application for resource consent:

- A completed and signed resource consent application form
- An **assessment of environmental effects (AEE)**
- A set of relevant plans, including a site plan of your site and proposal
- A current certificate of title
- The required deposit fee.

An application *must* also include the following information:

- A description of the activity
- A description of the site
- The full name and address of each owner or occupier of the site
- A description of any other activities that are part of the proposal
- A description of any other resource consents that are required
- An assessment of the proposal against the matters set out in Part 2 of the Resource Management Act 1991.
- An assessment against any relevant provisions of a plan or standard listed in Section 104(1)(b) of the RMA

The application form (available on council's website or front desk) will ask for most of this information, and details of the proposal can be explained in the AEE. It is important to be as clear as possible in your application, so the person processing your application understands your proposal.

Prior to lodging your application, it will also pay to get in touch with your neighbours, and anybody else you think could be affected by your proposal. Let them know what you're planning to do. This gives them the opportunity to raise any concerns they might have and let you work through a solution together. It is also helpful to have your neighbours give their written approval by filling out a written approval form. This ensures that when council considers your application any adverse effects on anybody that has given written approval can be disregarded. A copy of the written approval form is available from council's website or front desk.

What is an Assessment of Environmental Effects?

The AEE considers the level of effect, on a scale from less than minor to more than minor, of your activity on the environment. The AEE also explains your application in greater detail and assesses

the application against planning documents, legislation and other criteria required under the RMA. If you choose to prepare your AEE yourself, a good rule of thumb is that the amount of detail required is proportional to the scale of the effects of the activity.

The AEE is a very important document to help council to understand your proposed activity and consider it alongside the decision-making criteria listed in the RMA.

Depending on the nature, scale and intensity of your proposal, you may also need to support your application with other information. For example, if your activity generates a lot of traffic then a traffic impact assessment may be required. If your activity generates a lot of noise, then a noise report may be required. These types of reports often need to be prepared by qualified experts, so it will pay to discuss this with a council officer first to help you identify the information needs relevant to your application.

You may also like to consider seeking the assistance of a qualified planning consultant, as they can prepare a resource consent application on your behalf and help to supply all the necessary information that council would expect. While not required, we would recommend this approach, especially for more complex resource consent applications or if you are unfamiliar with the resource consent process.

Completed applications must be lodged with the council. Council will then check your application for completeness, and may ask for further information to ensure that it fully understands your proposal and any potential effects on the environment.

Step 2. Council Considers the Application

The second stage of the process is when council considers your application to decide whether it is complete. If it is rejected, your application will be returned to you. An application is incomplete if it is missing any of the information listed above.

If your application is accepted as complete, council will progress your application to the next step in the process.

If your application is considered to be incomplete, your application will be returned to you so that you have an opportunity to provide any missing information before filing the application again.

Council has certain timeframes set in the RMA to progress applications through to the decision stage. It is common practise during the processing of your application for council staff to undertake a site visit. This allows council staff to have a first-hand look at the site and to get a better understanding of how your proposal might affect the environment.

During this time council may also ask you for more information so it can better understand the environmental effects of your proposal. You can refuse to provide the information requested, but Council can then decide to publicly notify your application and continue to process it, which may lead to a hearing if a member of the public makes a submission in response to the public notification and asks council to be heard on the submission

There are some instances when Council might decide to either limited or publicly **notify** your application. Notification generally occurs when you have not obtained the written approval of an

affected person (this will lead to your application being limited notified to the affected person(s) alone), or if the effects of your activity on the environment are considered by Council to be more than minor (this will lead to your application being publicly notified to all members of the public). Any persons notified of your application will have the opportunity to make a submission on your proposal. If a submitter asks to be hearing on their submission, council will hold a hearing on your application at which both you and the submitter(s) can present to council. Council will then consider both your application and any submissions made when making a decision to grant or decline consent.

Step 3. Council Makes a Decision

The final stage is when council makes a decision on your application. You will receive a letter via post or email to let you know the outcome of your application.

If your application is granted your resource consent will tell you:

- any conditions that you must comply with when undertaking your activity;
- the reasons for the council's decision; and
- any other advice or guidance that council considers appropriate to let you know.

If your application is declined, council's letter will tell you the reasons for council's decision.

If you disagree with any part of the decision, you can formally object to the council or appeal to the Environment Court. You must do this within 15 working days of receiving the council's decision.

When can I apply for a permitted boundary activity?

Recent changes to the RMA mean that you can now apply to a district council to have your boundary activity exempt from needing a resource consent which would have otherwise been required under the district plan. If your application is successful, council will deem your activity to be a permitted activity.

A *boundary activity* means an activity:

- Where resource consent is normally required because it infringes a district plan boundary rule;
- That does not infringe any other district plan rule; and
- The 'infringed boundary' is not a 'public boundary' e.g. not a road boundary.

Boundary rules usually relate to the distance between a structure and a property boundary (or boundaries). Common examples of boundary rules in district plans include yard setbacks and height in relation to boundary rules.

You can now apply to be exempt from the requirement to get resource consent for a boundary rule infringement. You must still make an application to council, but it will be simpler and quicker than preparing and applying for resource consent.

An application for a boundary activity exemption will require all of the following information:

- An application form (this is available on council's website or from the front counter);
- A description of the activity;

- A plan of the site, drawn to scale, showing the height, shape and location on the site of the proposed activity;
- The name and address of each owner of the site;
- The name and address of each owner of a neighbouring site whose boundary will be infringed by the proposed activity; and
- The written approval from each owner of a neighbouring site whose boundary will be infringed by the proposed activity, including their signatures on the plan.

For clarity, an 'infringed boundary' means:

- When measured from the corner of a lot, every boundary that intersects with that corner; or
- If the 'infringed boundary' is next to a private way, the neighbour on the opposite side of the private way must also give their written approval.

If the council agrees that the activity is a boundary activity, and all the information is provided, the council must, within 10 working days, provide a written notice stating that the activity is a permitted activity. This means that no resource consent will be required for the boundary activity.

If you have applied for a resource consent in the meantime for the boundary activity, and council considers that the application qualifies as a boundary activity, then council must return the application to you without deciding it because no resource consent is needed.

Further Information

If you would like further information on applying for a resource consent or a permitted boundary activity, or you would like to discuss your proposal with a council officer, then please get in contact with us.