

Plan Change 78 as it applies to Warkworth and the Medium Density Residential Standards (MDRS)

Medium Density Residential Standards

The government has directed the Auckland Council to include the Medium Density Residential Standards ('MDRS') in the Auckland Unitary Plan. The council is doing this through the recently notified 'Plan Change 78 – Intensification'.

The MDRS enables more housing of up to three storeys on most residential sites across the city. This will enable more homes, like town houses, terrace housing and low-rise apartments, across almost all Auckland suburbs, including Warkworth.

To read more about what MDRS means view the link below:

[https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/UnitaryPlanDocuments/PC%2078%20Information%20Sheet%204%20Medium%20Density%20Residential%20Standards%20\(MDRS\).pdf](https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/UnitaryPlanDocuments/PC%2078%20Information%20Sheet%204%20Medium%20Density%20Residential%20Standards%20(MDRS).pdf)

The MDRS came into force on 20 August across all “relevant residential zones” in Auckland. Towns with populations under 5,000 at the 2018 census were excluded from having the MDRS apply (e.g. Point Wells, Wellsford, Helensville). Warkworth is the only settlement in the north of Auckland where the population exceeded 5,000. Therefore, the MDRS applies to all the existing residential zones in Warkworth.

Qualifying Matters

The only way to remove or reduce the impacts of the MDRS is through a “qualifying matter”. The council has already identified various qualifying matters across Auckland, but currently there is no large-scale qualifying matter that covers all Warkworth’s residential area (and would remove or reduce the intensification otherwise enabled by the MDRS).

To read more about qualifying matters view the two links below:

[https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/UnitaryPlanDocuments/PC%2078%20Information%20Sheet%207%20Qualifying%20Matters%20\(Part%201\).pdf](https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/UnitaryPlanDocuments/PC%2078%20Information%20Sheet%207%20Qualifying%20Matters%20(Part%201).pdf)

[https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/UnitaryPlanDocuments/PC%2078%20Information%20Sheet%208%20Qualifying%20Matters%20\(Part%202\).pdf](https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/UnitaryPlanDocuments/PC%2078%20Information%20Sheet%208%20Qualifying%20Matters%20(Part%202).pdf)

The submission period is currently open on Plan Change 78 – Intensification and there is an opportunity for any person or group to lodge a submission either supporting the new Unitary Plan provisions or seeking that they are deleted or amended.

As noted above, the only way that the MDRS can be amended is through the identification of a qualifying matter. The government has restricted qualifying matters to a number of matters, but additional qualifying matters can be added (subject to a site-by-site assessment).

Two additional qualifying matters that might be able to be argued to remove or reduce the MDRS in Warkworth are around transport and wastewater infrastructure. These qualifying matters could cover the existing Single House zoned area of Warkworth and could limit the additional dwelling capacity enabled in this area (reducing the impact on infrastructure).

1. **Transport** – Warkworth is distant from major employment areas and it does not have a sufficiently developed public transport system to support high density housing at this time. New residents are unlikely to heavily rely on public transport so the MDRS (allowing three dwellings per property) will likely result in more cars being added to our local roads. With smaller boundary restrictions, dwellings may be built with insufficient off-street parking for the 2-3 vehicles per household typically owned in Warkworth, so residents may find they need to park their cars in narrow streets, on berms, and blocking footpaths. This could become an access issue for emergency vehicles, rubbish and recycling trucks, and other residents' access to their properties.

In addition, many of our existing residential areas have incomplete footpath networks meaning that walking is often not a safe option. Warkworth also has a very minimal safe cycling network. Therefore, new residents will be unlikely to heavily rely on active transport such as walking and cycling to get around. Private vehicles will more likely continue to be the preferred method of getting around, even over short distances.

Therefore, a submission on Plan Change 78 could seek that Transport be added as a qualifying matter for Warkworth's Single House zone – to remove or reduce the building heights and densities enabled by MDRS for this area. This is because Warkworth does not have a comprehensive public transport and active transport system that offers residents an alternative to using private cars. There is also no significant investment planned by Auckland Transport to implement such a system in the medium-term future.

2. **Wastewater Infrastructure** – It is acknowledged that significant investment is being made into Warkworth's wastewater infrastructure with the present upgrade of the Snells Beach Wastewater Treatment Plant, pump station in Lucy Moore Park, and wastewater pipe between Warkworth and Snells Beach.

However, Watercare's presentation at a recent community meeting said that the current upgrade was expected to have a life of 35 years to meet the planned growth. This planned growth was calculated before the Medium Density Residential Standards came into effect. Watercare's representatives commented that the MDRS could add an additional 5,000 dwellings to Warkworth, vastly shortening the life of the current upgrade before significant further investment and expansion is required. Private Plan Changes in Warkworth's Future Urban zoned area are also accelerating Warkworth's growth ahead of the sequencing initially planned.

Therefore a submission on Plan Change 78 could seek that Wastewater Infrastructure be added as a qualifying matter for Warkworth's Single House zone – to remove or reduce the building heights and densities enabled by MDRS for this area.

Submissions are open until **29 September**. Please have your say at:

<https://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/plans-projects-policies-reports-bylaws/our-plans-strategies/unitary-plan/auckland-unitary-plan-modifications/Pages/details.aspx?UnitaryPlanId=140>