

NAG submission on Draft Rodney Local Board (RLB) Plan 2026-2027

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1. Introduction

A Local Board Plan should explain how the Board intends to improve Rodney, not simply describe the activities it intends to undertake.

Section 4.3.3 of AC's Governance manual broadly summarises what Local Board Plans provide – i.e they:

- outline the local board's vision, strategic priorities, and desired outcomes
- include key projects and initiatives
- reflect the aspirations and priorities of local communities.

..but Local Board Plans must do more than that.

Section 16 (1)(b) of the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009 (the Act) says”

Each local board is responsible and democratically accountable for—

(b) identifying and communicating the interests and preferences of the people in its local board area in relation to the content of the strategies, policies, plans, and bylaws of the Auckland Council;

Section 20 says:

(2) The purpose of a local board plan is—

(a) to reflect the priorities and preferences of the communities within the local board area in respect of the level and nature of local activities to be provided by the Auckland Council over the next 3 years; and

(b) to identify and describe the interests and preferences of the people within the local board area for the purposes of enabling the local board to communicate those interests and preferences for the purposes of section 16(1)(b); and

(c) to provide a basis for developing the local board agreement for each of the next 3 years; and

(d) to inform the development of the next LTP, particularly in relation to the identification of the non-regulatory activities of the Council for which decision-making responsibility should be allocated to the local board; and

(e) to provide a basis for accountability of the local board to the communities in the local board area; and

(f) to provide an opportunity for people to participate in decision-making processes on the nature and level of local activities to be provided by the Council within the local board area.

(3) A local board plan must include—

(a) a statement of the default levels of service for local activities; and

(b) an explanation of each variation from the default levels of services proposed for the local board area, if any; and

(c) an estimate of the additional cost or the saving associated with each variation, if any; and

(d) an indicative local board budget, incorporating the estimates referred to in paragraph (c), that either—

(i) does not exceed the estimated funding allocation referred to in subsection (4)(b)(iii); or

(ii) exceeds the estimated funding allocation referred to in subsection (4)(b)(iii), but identifies how the expenses in excess of that allocation are proposed to be met from 1 or more local revenue sources.

2. Nature of the Draft Local Board Plan

NAG supports the preparation of a Local Board Plan and welcomes the opportunity to comment. However, we do not consider the draft document functions as a plan in the ordinary sense of the word. Nor in our view does it fulfil the requirements of the Act.

The plan should explain the outcomes the Board seeks to achieve, the strategic choices it has made, why those choices are preferred by the people in the Local Board Area and have been given priority over other possible actions.

This draft generally does not do that. It identifies activities and advocacy positions, but provides little explanation of why these have been selected as Rodney's priorities or how they were determined. In particular it does not show how it reflects the priorities and preferences of the community. Instead it is primarily a statement of what the Board intends to do.

Furthermore, the draft Plan fails to provide up to date performance metric data on the service level targets approved in last year's Agreement. That makes it impossible to evaluate whether rolling over the previous year's Agreement (which seems to be assumed) is what the people of Rodney seek or not.

This consultation is therefore defective if the people of Rodney cannot properly evaluate or support rolling over the previous year's agreement because the draft plan fails to provide up-to-date performance metric data.

As a result, it is difficult for the community to assess whether the Board's proposed programme reflects the issues that matter most to Rodney and whether alternative priorities have been considered.

Contrast this with what a plan that transparently discharges s20(2)(a) would look like: a plan that says "X% of respondents prioritised Y," or "community feedback on flood resilience led to Z initiative," so a reader — and a court, if it ever mattered — could trace priorities and performance back to the community rather than take the Board's word for it.

3. Non-compliance with Statutory Requirements

The draft Plan does not comply with all the requirements of the legislation quoted above. In particular, The most significant deficiencies are:

- It does not explicitly identify and communicate the interests and preferences of Rodney residents as required by sections 20(2)(b) and 16(1)(b).
- It does not include the default levels of service within the plan itself, instead providing a statement of a level of service statement and referring readers to the Long-term Plan. [Section 20(3)(a)]
- It does not identify variations from those default levels of service. [Section 20(3)(b)]
- It does not estimate the cost or savings of each variation. [Section 20(3)(c)]
- Its indicative budget is not linked to those variations as contemplated by section 20(3)(d).

3.1. Section 20(2)(b)

Requires: identify and describe the interests and preferences of the people...for the purposes of section 16(1)(b)

Section 16(1)(b) makes local boards responsible for identifying and communicating community interests to the Governing Body regarding strategies, policies, plans and bylaws.

The draft plan contains many advocacy statements, but nowhere does it systematically identify the interests of Rodney residents, the preferences of Rodney residents, or how those interests should influence Auckland Council strategies or policies.

Instead, it mostly states what the Board intends to advocate. Those are different things.

For example:

“Advocate for more investment...”. is not equivalent to

“Rodney residents identified increased investment in regional parks as one of their priorities.”

The Act requires the second.

The Board needs to publish the engagement data/summary of the level and nature of interests and preferences that supports the priorities and advocacy in the draft.

The current draft does not visibly meet s20(2)(a) or (b) without it.

3.2. 20(3)(a)

This section says the plan must include a statement of the default levels of service

The Levels of Service section on page 30 simply reproduces high-level service statements. It then says the actual default levels of service can be found in the Long-term Plan.

The Act does not say: “refer readers elsewhere”, or “provide a level of service statement”. It must state the default levels of service. “Level” implies quantification, as in Performance measures.

Merely cross-referencing another document or including wording from it does not satisfy the requirement of the Act.

3.3. 20(3)(b)

This section requires explanation of each variation from the default levels of service..

There is no identification of whether the default levels of service for the past year have been achieved. This is a defect in the draft which makes it impossible to evaluate whether to continue them, whether any variation is proposed for the next three years, and whether that reflects Rodney people’s wishes.

In fact there is no section identifying any proposed variation, or explanation at all.

3.4. 20(3)(c)

Requires an estimate of additional cost or saving associated with each variation.

No initiative includes any incremental cost or incremental saving relative to the default service level.

The Financial Overview contains aggregate expenditure only but that is not what the Act requires.

3.5. 20(3)(d)

Requires indicative local board budget incorporating those estimates

The Financial Overview provides an indicative operating and capital budget, but there is no linkage to service variations. It does not incorporate costs associated with variations because none are identified.

Accordingly there is an indicative budget, but not the budget contemplated by s20(3)(d).

4. Section 16(1)(b)

The Local Board's responsibility is: identifying and communicating the interests and preferences...

Yet, throughout the plan the Board says: "We will..." rather than "Our community told us..."

The legislation expects the Board to act as the democratic voice of Rodney.

The plan rarely distinguishes between community interests, Board policy, and Council operational intentions. Consequently the statutory communication role is only weakly demonstrated.

5. Title Misleading

The title and reference on each page says the Rodney Local Board Plan 2026. In fact it is the three year plan for 2026/29 that the legislation requires after each triennial election.

This is misleading as the public may think the plan is for one year only and not a plan that will be used as the basis for review of AC's Long Term Plan.

The Board should rename the plan to properly represent what it is.

6. Inconsistency

The Plan has comments and initiatives under Five main Groupings: Community; Natural Environment; Built Environment; Economic Development and Transport, with further sub-sections: Challenges; Opportunities; Our Plan and Advocacy.

Under Transport, the Our Plan Section is instead headed Our Priorities, presumably because of uncertainties from implementation of the Transport Governance legislation.

These main groupings do not align with the Four categories of service levels which are: Local Community Services; Local Planning and Development; Local Environmental Management and Local Governance.

No explanation is provided for why there are no service levels for Built Environment or Transport. The only Service level for Planning and Development in the Agreement is that BIDs meet their agreed obligations. Apart from that being a requirement, rather than a performance measure, the activities of the 2 BIDs and their membership are way short of the aspiration for the whole of Rodney expressed in the plan narrative.

In the Financial Overview, the Operating Expenditure is grouped by: Community Services (**Community**); Local Environmental Management (**Natural Environment**); Local Planning – BIDs and Local Governance. Capital expenditure is just for Community Services (**Community**).

No entries for Built Environment, Economic Development or Transport are shown (and whether funding is provided for them or not)

There is no explanation for these inconsistencies in categories. While the Financial Overview is presumably for LDI and ABS funding (it doesn't say), there is no reason why other finances under control of the Board (like the RLBTR) are not shown. The spending on these should be shown in its Annual Plan, so that the public can get a complete picture of planning for the Board's areas of responsibility.

7. Recommendation

The Local Board must provide an interim performance update on last year's service levels before finalizing the current year's text.

Then the Local Board Plan should:

- Publish the engagement data/summary of the level and nature of interests and preferences that supports the priorities and advocacy in the draft.
- Explain the principal issues facing Rodney that the Board is seeking to address;
- Explain why the identified priorities have been selected over other possible priorities using demonstrated community views
- Explain how the Board expects those priorities to improve outcomes for Rodney in terms of the interests and preferences of the people of Rodney; and
- Say how success will be measured and reported, and how this varies from what was agreed last year.

Otherwise the Plan is defective, likely non-compliant and possibly subject to challenge.

Furthermore, the Board repeatedly says “our plan”, but nowhere does it explain how it planned.

A genuine planning document would normally show something like -

Rodney faces these major issues → these were the options considered → these are the priorities the people of Rodney prefer → therefore these are the activities we will fund and the advocacy we will undertake.

Instead, the document effectively begins at the last step: “These are the things we intend to do.”

That is why it reads more like a work programme than a plan. It is not that the activities are wrong; it is that the reasoning connecting Rodney's problems to those activities is largely absent.

Furthermore, If the Plan does not clearly identify community priorities, does not identify variations in levels of service and does not identify the costs of those variations, then it becomes difficult for the Local Board Agreement to satisfy Section 21 because there is little concrete information for it to “reflect”.

NAG supports many of the proposed initiatives. However, we consider the Plan would be significantly strengthened by becoming a clearer statement of the Board’s strategic direction and by better explaining why the proposed priorities have been selected and how they reflect the interests and preferences of the people of Rodney and how they will improve outcomes for them.

This is in addition to providing a Section which explicitly meets the requirements of Section 20(3).

8. Impact of the Long Term Plan

The plan notes “The next long-term plan is due to take effect from 1 July 2027. This could change funding...and will affect how we achieve the goals set out in this local board plan.”

That raises considerable uncertainty about the relevance of the plan for the last two years. The Plan is supposed to cover 2026/29. Yet after only the first year, a completely new Long-term Plan may alter operating funding, capital funding, priorities and delivery.

That means almost two-thirds of the Plan is explicitly acknowledged to be contingent upon decisions not yet made. Consequently, almost every initiative is effectively contingent.

From a planning perspective It substantially weakens the document. A genuine development plan would normally say “If funding changes, these are our priorities.”, or say what the relative priorities would be under different funding scenarios. Instead, the Rodney Plan largely says “These are the things we would like to do.” without explaining which are essential, which would proceed first, which would be deferred if funding changed, and which would not proceed.

9. General Recommendations

NAG recommends that the final Local Board Plan place greater emphasis on planning rather than simply describing activities.

In particular the final Plan should:

9.1. Explain the Board’s Strategic Choices

The Plan should explain why the identified priorities have been selected instead of other possible priorities and show how they reflect the interests and preferences of the people of Rodney.

For example, why has the Board chosen to emphasise certain initiatives while giving relatively little attention to:

- improving Auckland Council’s planning system
- strategic land acquisition
- public asset provision ahead of growth

- infrastructure funding reform
- value for money across Council
- community-led planning?

9.2. Strengthen Integrated Planning

The Local Board should recognise planning itself as one of its major leadership roles.

Rodney needs integrated planning that links:

- population growth
- transport
- water services
- public facilities
- parks
- community infrastructure
- funding.

Community-led integrated planning reflecting the interests and preferences of the people of Rodney should become an explicit objective of the Local Board Plan.

9.3. Focus on Public Assets Ahead of Growth

The Plan should advocate more strongly for acquiring and funding public assets before development occurs.

Strategic land acquisition for roads, parks, sports fields and community facilities is considerably less expensive before urban development than afterwards and results in better long-term outcomes.

9.4. Better Link Growth and Funding

The Plan correctly identifies infrastructure pressures arising from growth but gives relatively little attention to how those facilities will be funded.

The Board should advocate not only for more funding but also for better funding systems that ensure growth contributes fairly to the infrastructure and public facilities it requires.

9.5. Introduce Community-Based Planning

The Local Board should establish a funded Community-Based Planning Programme that enables communities to participate directly in planning the future of their towns and settlements, rather than primarily commenting on Council proposals after they have been prepared.

9.6. Measure Outcomes Rather than Activities

Future Local Board Plans and Annual Agreements should report against measurable outcomes wherever practical rather than simply reporting activities undertaken.

The community should be able to assess whether expenditure has improved outcomes.

9.7. Strengthen Advocacy

Advocacy priorities should identify:

- the outcome sought
- who is responsible
- the principal actions the Board intends to take
- how progress will be reported.

9.8. Improve Accountability

The Annual Local Board Agreement should clearly demonstrate how funded activities contribute to the objectives of the Local Board Plan and report regularly against those objectives using measurable indicators rather than activity counts or broad status reporting

10. Specific Recommendations by Plan Section

10.1. Community

NAG supports the emphasis on community resilience, parks, recreation and local identity.

Performance metrics for Level of Service

With the emphasis the Board has placed in Community Engagement commencing from 2025/26 spending nearly \$1m on this activity in 2026/2027 this would be a good time to introduce a relevant service level performance measure that actually relates to its purpose.

Rather than measuring what are outputs from the perspective of AC's delivery (number of events delivered) the Board should measure what are outputs from the perspective of Rodney people (i.e what is the level of service received {and thus the benefit} across people who receive it and those who don't). Running events no one attends is like running empty buses! Its an activity performed that incurs a cost but provides no benefit to the people of Rodney.

Nor in the same way is the number of partner organisations relevant to what people receive, since the quality of what partners do and who in the community they do it for determines the benefit.

A possible useful metric for the community engagement programme NAG would like to see would be the percentage of Rodney people attending one or more events (avoid double counting).

The target should be at higher than the level of local election voting turnout (~40%) or the programme is engaging people who already care, not those voters who feel disconnected and disenfranchised.

If the target demographic for engagement is different for age groups (e.g. young people), the percentage from each demographic attending one or more events would also be a suitable measure.

We recommend the Plan:

- establish a funded Community-Based Planning Programme as a continuing activity

- strengthen support for community organisations that assist local planning and long-term development
- include measurable community outcome indicators rather than activity measures
- explicitly recognise the importance of planning future community facilities before growth occurs
- report annually on community outcomes achieved rather than programmes delivered.

10.2. Natural Environment

NAG supports the emphasis on biodiversity, waterways, pest control and climate resilience.

The key to achieving that alongside private development and rural and lifestyle growth is a community based and supported Development Plan as a framework for the Local Board's annual plan, decision-making and spending activities. Otherwise this RLB Plan is simply reactive and provides a vision without any direction on how to achieve it.

The RLB Plan should:

- better integrate environmental restoration with future land use and growth planning
- place greater emphasis on catchment-scale planning involving local communities
- advocate stronger measures to reduce sediment entering waterways before development occurs
- recognise that environmental planning should be integrated with infrastructure planning rather than treated separately.

10.3. Built Environment

This is the section where NAG believes the greatest improvements can be made.

The Plan should:

- advocate strategic land acquisition before development as part of an integrated Development Plan for Rodney.
- advocate public asset provision ahead of population growth
- explicitly support integrated development planning linking infrastructure, public facilities and land use
- strengthen advocacy that infrastructure should precede development rather than follow it
- include stronger advocacy for planning reform that better coordinates private development with public investment.

10.4. Economic Development

NAG supports encouraging local employment and thriving town centres. But there is no indication in the plan of the kind of business that Rodney residents want to see attracted to Rodney, or how the area should be planned spatially to encourage that.

Additional emphasis should be given to:

- protecting sufficient employment land
- encouraging employment close to where people live
- identifying the types of business “clusters” that Rodney people would like to see flourish here along with housing growth
- recognising that infrastructure investment is itself an economic development strategy
- supporting planning that enables local businesses to grow alongside residential development
- recognising the contribution of community-led initiatives to local economic resilience.

10.5. Transport

NAG strongly supports the emphasis on safer rural roads and improved transport connections. But it should say, for example, whether people want better and safer roads rather than speed reductions to improve safety, and better safer connecting roads rather than uneconomic, ratepayer subsidised, public transport over connecting routes.

The Plan should also advocate:

- transport planning integrated with future growth planning
- strategic acquisition of future transport corridors
- transport investment that keeps pace with population growth
- improved reporting on transport investment and management in Rodney
- greater emphasis on maintaining existing rural road assets to design standards.

10.6. Governance and Advocacy

NAG considers this section should be strengthened considerably.

The Board should advocate for:

- improved planning across Auckland Council
- fairer rating and funding for Rodney
- better alignment between growth and public infrastructure
- greater value for money across Council expenditure
- stronger community participation in planning
- transparent reporting of advocacy outcomes
- measurable reporting against Plan objectives
- regular review of Board priorities in consultation with Rodney communities.

11. Conclusion

NAG supports many of the initiatives contained within the Draft Rodney Local Board Plan.

However, the final Plan would be significantly strengthened if it evolved from primarily describing intended activities into a clearer statement of the Board’s leadership role, the outcomes it seeks for the people of Rodney, and how and why these reflect the interests, preferences and priorities of the people of Rodney.



The Local Board has an opportunity to become a stronger advocate for Rodney by leading and supporting integrated community-based planning rather than primarily supporting and continuing existing Council programmes.

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