

12 August 2025

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Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL INFORMATION AND MEETINGS ACT 1987: REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Thank you for your email dated 2 August 2025 requesting official information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA). A decision has now been made on your request pursuant to section 13 of the LGOIMA, and to provide the information requested.

I would like to thank you for attending the Awakeri community drop in session, and for your continued engagement. It is encouraging to see strong local interest as we begin this important conversation about Awakeri's future.

The Eastern Bay of Plenty Spatial Plan identified Awakeri as an area for future growth. We recognise, however, that planning for growth here is both complex and sensitive. As we now begin this process, a key focus is to hear directly from the Awakeri community and to understand what matters most to landowners and residents, what they value, what worries them, and what they want to see protected.

In your request you asked for the following information:

GENERAL STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

1. Is our property on SH2 included in the Awakeri structure plan area or any future growth zoning overlays?

Awakeri is well positioned strategically, including for access at the confluence of State Highway 2 and State Highway 30. Although no planning or boundaries have been identified yet, one of the cornerstones for structure planning will be the integration with the existing services, in particular the school and events centre, and commercial area. The Council's intention is to keep engaging with the community to identify future growth areas, but at this stage we are unable to provide further information on specific properties.

2. How will the proposed growth and infrastructure plans affect land use rules on lifestyle properties like ours?

There are no changes to land use rules proposed yet. If rezoning is introduced through a future structure plan, any new provisions would go through a formal consultation process with submissions received and opportunities for landowners to provide feedback. A Plan Change to rezone land from rural to residential would allow housing at greater density to be built, subject to the necessary infrastructure being in place to support the intensification of land use. Equally, the Plan Change would need to plan for adjoining land uses that may remain rural in nature. Until a formal change to the District Plan occurs, the current District Plan rules remain in effect. It is also worth noting that the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) is currently being reformed by the Government, and changes to the way rezoning of rural land for urban use is considered are under discussion. Again, no official changes have been made to date.

3. What is the timeline for infrastructure upgrades (e.g. wastewater, roads) in the Awakeri SH2 corridor?

There is no confirmed timeline for infrastructure upgrades at this stage. Infrastructure planning will follow the structure planning process and be informed by the outcomes of technical investigations and community engagement.

ZONING & LAND VALUE QUESTIONS

1. Will our land's zoning change in the next District Plan Review? If so, what would the new zone allow or restrict?

No zoning changes have been confirmed at this stage. The Government has recently announced that no further district plan reviews will be undertaken while the reforms to the RMA are underway. The Council expects that any changes to zones will therefore take place under future legislation. However, a structure plan for Awakeri will be developed through community consultation and will indicate potential zones. This will also help define the timing of any change to the District Plan, the timing of infrastructure investment and how that will be funded. The funding for any investment will occur through the Council's Long Term Plan, which is reviewed every three years. While the district needs to plan for future housing growth, we also need to align out planning with other agencies, such as the NZ Transport Agency, and plan for the investment (which is considerable) alongside other Council priorities.

2. Will the council support subdivision or business development for sites as part of this spatial plan?

The Council will prepare a structure plan that identifies areas that may be appropriate for future subdivision or business activity, subject to infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, and strategic fit. The Council will also consent subdivision proposals, facilitate the

coordination of investment between parties (such as developers, the Council and NZTA), and approve engineering works to ensure minimum standards are met. At this time, no specific incentives or support have been investigated.

3. How will the council manage rural–urban interface areas to protect existing landowners like us from reverse sensitivity issues?

Managing the interface between rural and urban land uses is a key consideration in the structure planning process. Potential future development areas will be assessed to ensure that adverse effects on existing landowners are managed appropriately. This is often achieved through physical separation of land uses by retaining a buffer area.

BUSINESS OPERATIONS & LIFESTYLE

1. If people run businesses from their rural lifestyle properties, will they need new consents in future?

Lawfully established activities will be able to continue operating under the terms of their resource consents (if any) or they can operate under existing use rights if the rules change but the effects of the activity are of the same scale, character and intensity as was legally operating before the rules changed.

2. What types of business or light commercial activity are expected or supported along SH2 in Awakeri?

The EBOP Spatial Plan identified that Kawerau will remain the primary industrial hub for the sub-region. Therefore, large-scale industrial activities are expected to locate there. However, opportunities that can provide for local employment will be considered through the structure planning process.

3. Will the spatial plan protect existing lifestyle owners' rights to maintain privacy, rural character, and land-based businesses?

One of the central drivers in any growth in Awakeri will be the protection of highly productive land (HPL). Although some HPL loss is likely due to Awakeri's location in the rural production zone, the key will be minimizing this loss by balancing urban growth, protecting rural character, and achieving sufficient density of development to reduce HPL loss while providing for future development capacity. Protecting existing landowner interests, including rural character and amenity values, is an important consideration in the structure planning process. While some land-use change may be proposed, careful attention will be given to effects on existing uses and the quality of the living environment.

COMMUNITY INPUT & RIGHTS

1. **How can we stay informed and involved in the rezoning, structure planning, or infrastructure investment decisions?**

I encourage you to stay engaged in the process, attend future engagement events, and make submissions during public consultation phases. Direct contact with the planning team is also welcome at any time. Feedback received at the Community Open Day included a suggestion to establish a community reference group to be involved in the development of the structure plan, which the Council is actively considering.

2. **Will there be an official consultation period for zoning changes affecting SH2 corridor properties?**

Yes. Although the Government has placed a hold plan changes, the structure plan or any proposed zoning changes would still be part of a formal consultation process under either the Local Government Act 2002 or the RMA (or successor legislation).

3. **What weight will iwi, landowners, and business operators' views carry in final decisions about Awakeri growth?**

The structure plan is being shaped through engagement with mana whenua, landowners, and the community. All feedback will be considered in the development of the plan and any future planning decisions. It is important to understand the aspirations of all parties involved and how to integrate both current and future aspirations into the growth planning.

4. **Are there incentives or support for local businesses to align with the spatial plan (eg grants, infrastructure cost-sharing, fast-tracking)?**

At this time, no specific incentives or support have been investigated.

5. **Can we work with council planners to co-design development options that protect our lifestyle and unlock value?**

Yes. As I mentioned earlier, one approach that has been suggested to us is to establish a community reference group. Council staff can also engage directly with landowners. Early discussions help ensure the structure plan reflects a range of perspectives and can explore solutions that balance growth with existing values.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like to meet with a member of the planning team to discuss your property further. Your input is valued and will help shape a structure plan that supports the future of Awakeri in a thoughtful, sustainable, and balanced way.

If you are not satisfied with my response, you are entitled to request a review by the Ombudsman. Further information can be obtained from the following website www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Please note that this response may be published on our website. All personal information will be removed.

Nāku noa, nā



Steven Perdia
CHIEF EXECUTIVE