

Watercare Growth Servicing Policy 2026



Preface from Priyan Perera, Chief Strategy and Planning Officer

Watercare is delivering smarter for Auckland today and tomorrow.

We are investing at record levels and planning ahead to support a growing Auckland for generations to come, while protecting the health of water, the environment and the communities connected to it.

Planning ensures we deliver infrastructure to support sustainable growth in the right place at the right time, and maintain critical lifeline services to 1.7 million customers every day. Watercare aligns our long-term infrastructure planning with Auckland Council's plans and strategies.

We are delivering more than 1,000 water and wastewater projects over the next decade to expand capacity and renew ageing infrastructure. Around half of our capital programme is dedicated to growth infrastructure, with the other half being spent on replacing or upgrading existing assets.

As we invest to support growth and resilience, we also carefully manage existing network capacity so Aucklanders continue to receive services they can count on. Capacity is monitored across treatment plants and bulk networks, and assessed against discharge consent limits, including wastewater overflow frequency.

We provide developers, communities and other key stakeholders with transparent, timely information about capacity including a [capacity map and checker](#), and details of the infrastructure planned to unlock future capacity. We are building stronger relationships with the development community and encourage developers to contact us early in their planning to discuss servicing options and project feasibility.

We are aligning our planning so new communities have the services they need from day one and to protect the environment and deliver safe, reliable and sustainable water and wastewater services for Auckland.

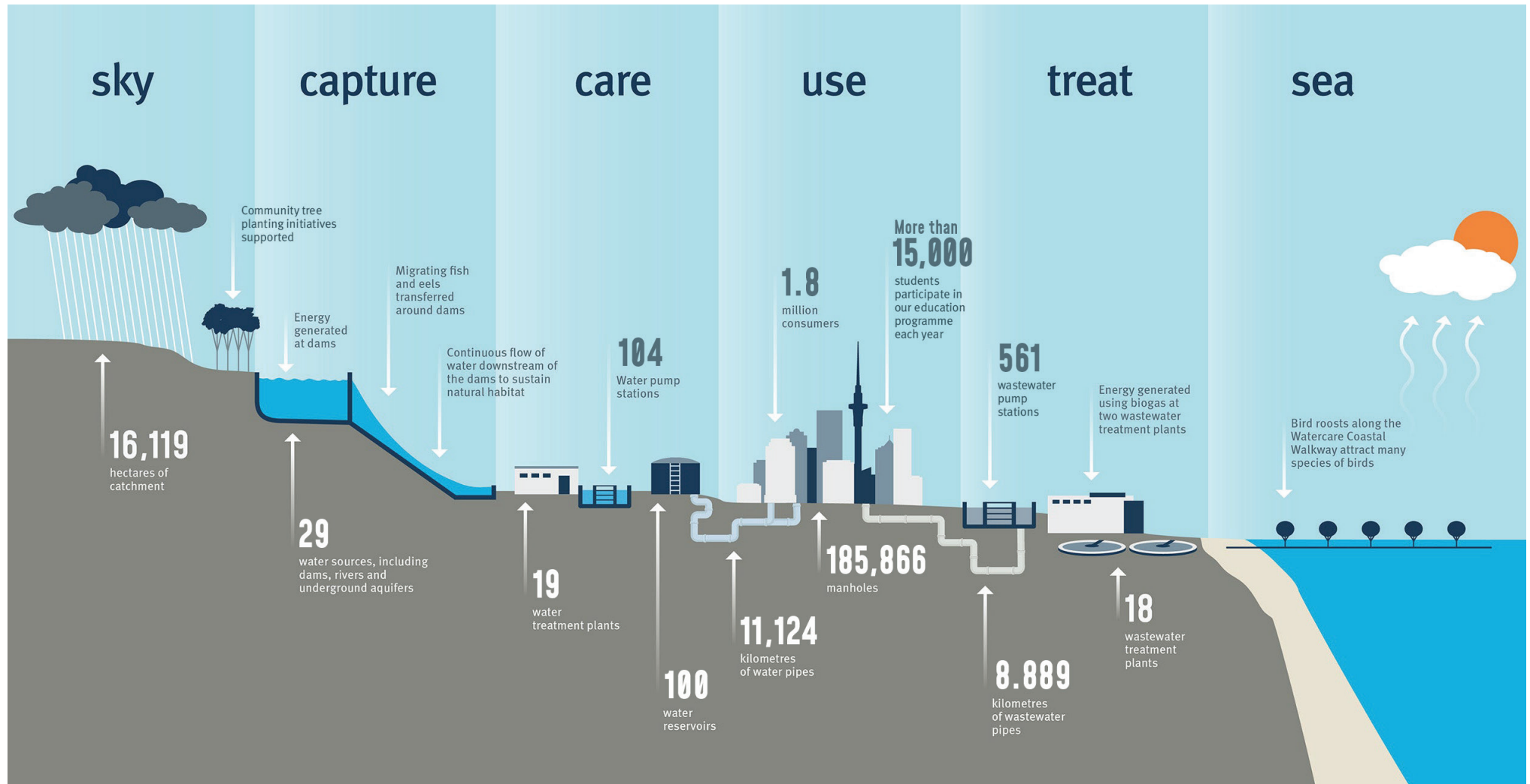
We look forward to working with you.

Priyan Perera

Chief Strategy and Planning Officer

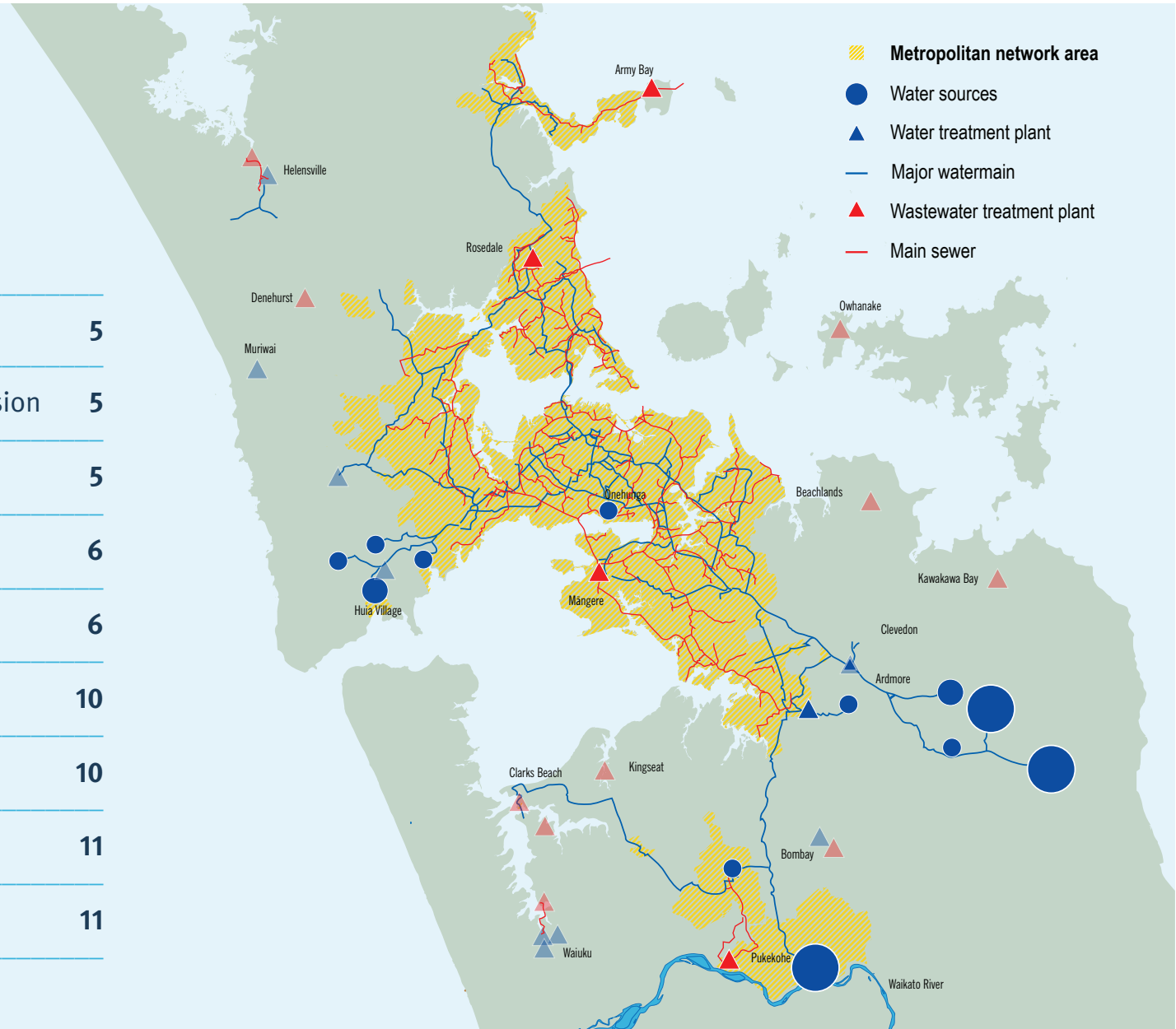


From sky to sea: Providing critical lifeline services for one third of New Zealand's population



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Planning for Growth

Local Water Done Well

The Watercare Charter came into effect on 1 April 2025. Watercare is now economically independent and regulated by the Crown monitor, which includes transparent performance reporting. As part of our Charter deliverables, we are also undertaking a formal review of our pricing, cost-recovery and charging framework, including how infrastructure growth charges are set. We will consult with the development community as this work progresses.

Watercare became financially independent on 1 July 2025. Moodys has given Watercare an investment grade credit rating and we have completed New Zealand's largest corporate debt capital raise. Our bank debt facilities are established and we are an active participant in the global debt markets.

Aligning with Auckland Council's vision

As part of the Auckland Council group, Watercare aligns our long term planning with the [Future Development Strategy](#) to ensure we deliver infrastructure at the right time to enable growth. As new resource management legislation is enacted, we will work with council on spatial planning to embed it. We also use council's Auckland Growth Scenario to guide our planning – we apply the medium growth projections as the basis for planning water and wastewater projects, and follow formal updates to council plans and projections.

We are in the process of developing our first Water Services Strategy, which will provide a 30-year investment plan. Our investment plans are reviewed regularly to ensure they keep pace with an evolving Auckland.

Out-of-sequence growth

Development is increasing in areas that have not been signalled through Auckland Council's growth plans, and or are coming earlier than anticipated. This creates challenges for Watercare's ability to respond. Bulk infrastructure on the scale that we operate has complex delivery paths and takes time to plan, investigate, consent and construct. With long term planning and large construction projects in train, it can be impractical to pivot to respond to unplanned growth.

There are both positive and negative consequences of unanticipated growth, and Watercare provides technical information to the Auckland Council group to support its assessment of broader implications.

Watercare Bylaw






Any person wishing to connect to Watercare's water and/or wastewater asset(s) must first obtain Watercare's approval for such connection under the Water Supply and Wastewater Network Bylaw 2015 (Bylaw).

Under the Bylaw, Watercare may refuse an application to connect to a network in specified circumstances, including where, in Watercare's reasonable opinion, there is insufficient capacity in the network to accommodate the connection.

Pathways for servicing growth

There are five categories for servicing growth, with three in Watercare's existing area of service. Our existing area of service is defined in the [Watercare capacity map](#), available on our website and regularly updated. The capacity maps do not include the Future Urban Zone, where capacity availability depends very much on the timing of proposed development and infrastructure, and the pace of growth in the live zones.

Servicing categories

-  **Category 1** In Watercare's existing area of service
-  **Category 2** Contiguous with the area of service
-  **Category 3** Non-contiguous with existing bulk network
-  **Category 4** Future urban or equivalent zone
-  **Category 5** Rural or equivalent zone

The key factor determining if a proposed development can be serviced is the available capacity in the bulk networks and treatment plants (the major pipes, pump stations and plants that service whole communities) to support increased demand.

Local network infrastructure to connect the development to the nearest point in Watercare's existing bulk network is the responsibility of the developer. In some cases, where there is an existing local network, it may need to be upgraded by the developer to support the new demand.

If a development sits across two or more categories, Watercare will make this clear in our response, and identify which parts of the development site can be serviced.

Category pathways

Category ①: In Watercare's existing area of service

These are developments within Watercare's existing area of service, which is largely consistent with existing urban areas or zones. Depending on the availability of capacity, there are two pathways:

- a) **There is capacity.** The development can connect subject to any required local upgrades being completed and payment of the Infrastructure Growth Charge.
- b) **There is limited or no capacity to service the development.** The development will either need to be staged to align with the available bulk capacity, wait for infrastructure upgrades in line with the timing in Watercare's Investment and Delivery Plan, or developers can fund the necessary infrastructure upgrade through a commercial agreement (also known as an Infrastructure Funding Agreement).

Category ②: Contiguous with the area of service

These are developments that are within the area of service and are contiguous with our network. Pathways include:

- a) **Capacity is available** – the development can connect subject to any required local upgrades being completed and payment of the relevant Infrastructure Growth Charge.
- b) **Limited or no capacity to service the development.** The development will either need to be staged to remain within the available bulk capacity, wait for infrastructure upgrades in accordance with the timing in Watercare's Investment and Delivery Plan, or the developers can fund the necessary infrastructure upgrade through a commercial agreement (also known as an Infrastructure Funding Agreement).

Category ③: Non-contiguous with existing bulk network

These developments are not contiguous with our existing bulk network, but are within our area of service. Following our review of the developer's technical, economic and environmental assessment, the following pathways are available:

- a) **Infrastructure is planned** – wait for the Investment and Delivery Plan project, or agree an interim solution with Watercare, or accelerate via a commercial agreement and pay the connection costs.
- b) **Infrastructure is not planned** – a commercial agreement is entered to recover the capex and opex for a centralised or interim distributed system.

Category 4: Future Urban or equivalent zone

These developments are within the Future Urban or equivalent zone, and sit outside our current area of service. We encourage developers to look at the timing for this land to be development ready in council's Development Strategy or equivalent, as Watercare's long term plans for bulk upgrades align with this timing.

Council has a statutory responsibility to set direction for future growth across the region. Auckland Council's [Auckland Unitary Plan](#) and the [Future Development Strategy](#) anticipate that future urban areas will be rezoned for urban development before development occurs. Where development is proposed via Fast Track or Resource Consent to occur before land is rezoned via a plan change, council will undertake a policy assessment. This will consider consistency with its plans and strategies, and what other infrastructure is required to support a thriving community.

Watercare will follow council's lead on strategic consistency. If infrastructure servicing is to be provided, there are two pathways for developments to access water and wastewater services in this zone, after a technical, economic, and environmental assessment has been completed by the developer and reviewed by Watercare.

- a) **Infrastructure is planned** – wait for an Investment and Delivery Plan project, or accelerate delivery via a commercial agreement.
- b) **Infrastructure is not planned** – Commercial agreement to cover both capex and opex for a centralised or distributed interim system to service the development.

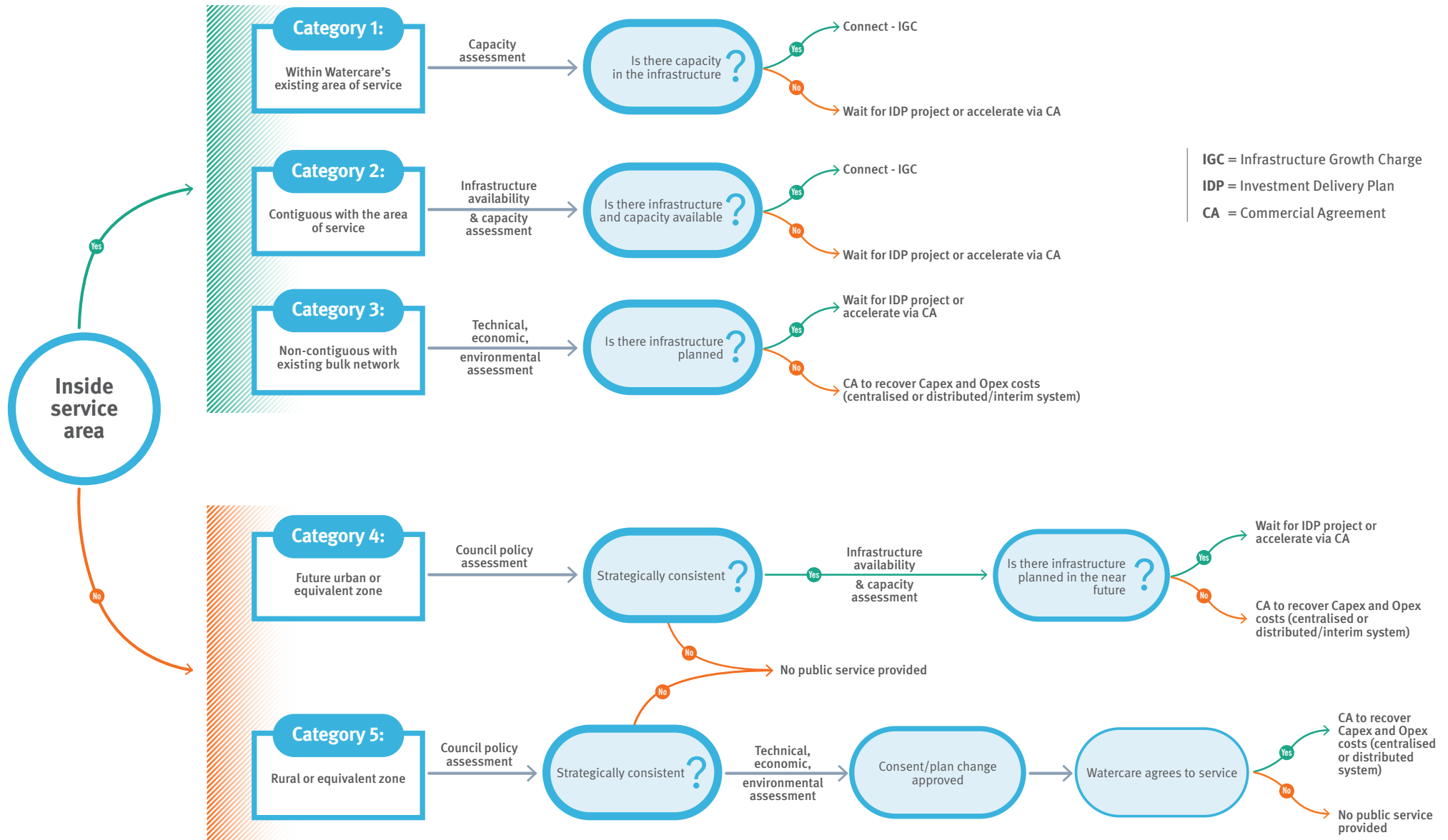
We do not support permanent private servicing within Future Urban areas, as we plan to deliver, or have already invested public funds into projects to service these areas.

Interim servicing must be designed in coordination with Watercare and designed to Watercare's Code of Practice and Standards. This will ensure that any transition from interim to permanent servicing is managed effectively and reduces any disruption to communities.

Category 5: Rural or equivalent zone

These developments sit outside our area of service and Watercare does not have plans to service them.

The first step required is a policy assessment from Auckland Council. If Auckland Council supports servicing of the development, then following a technical, economic and environmental assessment undertaken by the developer and Watercare agreeing to service, a commercial agreement would be required to recover the capex and opex of a centralised or distributed system.



Commercial agreements

Watercare may choose to enter into a commercial agreement with a developer to enable a development. Examples of agreements include where a developer may build infrastructure on behalf of Watercare when developing a site. Before entering into any commercial agreement, we work with developers to understand:

- Complexity and importance
- Dependencies
- Availability of funding and resources
- Consistency with Watercare Servicing Strategies and Water and Wastewater Auckland Code of Practice for Land Development and Subdivision
- Developer track record and ability to deliver assets
- Cost benefit analysis

All agreements are subject to an approved Watercare business case.

Infrastructure Growth Charges – IGCs

Developers pay an infrastructure growth charge for their development at the time a new connection is made to the network, or when an existing connection increases demand through a change in use or expansion of use. This is in line with the terms of [Watercare's Customer Contract](#). The cost of this charge varies depending on the location of the site.

Watercare currently charges an Infrastructure Growth Charge to recover a portion of the costs associated with expanding the capacity of the existing treatment plants and bulk networks to support growth.

Providing local reticulation within new developments, and connecting the development to the existing bulk networks is the developer's responsibility.

If the existing local network infrastructure servicing the proposed development requires improvements - increasing the width of the pipes to support the greater demand from the development for example, to enable the development to connect - this is funded and delivered by the developer.

Designated areas

Watercare recognises that Requiring Authorities (for example NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, Auckland Transport, Ministry of Education) will establish designations within the categories covered by this policy to support growing communities. Watercare encourages Requiring Authorities to make contact early to discuss servicing needs, and depending on capacity and circumstances, the policy may not apply to public services such as schools and hospitals. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis in liaison with Auckland Council.

Area of service

Watercare's area of service is illustrated by our [network capacity map](#). This provides information of where bulk servicing is available. If you are planning a development, use the [network capacity checker](#) on our website and [contact](#) Watercare to discuss your plans early in your planning process.

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