



Topic 12: Rural Zones

Introduction

As part of the District Plan Review, Timaru District Council has commissioned a Discussion Document on rural zones to stimulate discussion and form a basis for public consultation. This can be found at www.timaru.govt.nz/dpr.

It identifies two main issues with how the current District Plan manages rural zones, establishes potential options to address these issues and discusses the associated strengths and weaknesses. We seek your feedback on the issues and options.

Issues and Options

Issue 1

Should the District Plan specifically control intensive rural activities?

"Intensive rural activities" are activities which, because of their character, scale and intensity have direct impacts beyond the site on which they occur.

The current District Plan, like many others, was developed at a time when farming activities generally involved sheep and cattle and / or cropping. Stocking levels were not intensive and there were fewer inputs in terms of providing feed, collecting produce, machinery and labour. With the more recent availability of irrigation there has been a significant increase in dairy farms within the District and Canterbury and with that, increased stocking and activity rates.

The three major types of adverse effects from more intensive rural activities are on the natural environment, neighbours and on roads. In general these effects are managed under the Resource Management Act 1991 by Canterbury Regional Council through controlling discharge of effluent to land and water, and discharge to air.

Off-site impacts of more intensive uses of the rural area, including dairying, can be experienced from single operations or result from the large number and scale of farms in an area. Potential impacts include:

- Greater use of roads for cartage and herding within and between farm blocks, and for deliveries and pickups. This can lead to problems for other road users as well as real issues with maintaining the carriageways, accesses and road verges.
- Impact of large farm buildings, including dairy sheds, close to the road or neighbouring properties with associated noise, odour, visual, lighting and traffic generation effects.

This summary outlines the issues our district faces in relation to rural zones.

We welcome your feedback on this topic.

Richard Lyon
Pleasant Point/Temuka
Ward Councillor





- Noise impacts including from frost machines.
- Loss of biodiversity and visual amenity with the removal of shelter planting and trees and vegetation in general.
- Change in rural character from an increase in the number and size of buildings, including farm worker accommodation.

Other rural activities such as quarrying, mining and forestry also create effects that are experienced beyond their sites including noise, dust and vibration. In particular, they can involve intense periods of heavy traffic, hauling logs and gravel etc. This results in damage to roads and creates safety and amenity issues for road users and neighbouring landowners.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) retain the current District Plan provisions that intensive rural activities do not have standards to meet or require a resource consent; (ii) include rules in the District Plan that require resource consents for intensive rural activities to enable their effects to be assessed and managed; or (iii) include rules in the District Plan that require resource consent for activities which breach limits relating to effects such as noise, setbacks and heavy traffic generation.

Issue 2

Effects on roading

The effects on roading, and in particular the consequential cost of repairing and upgrading roads from intensive activities involving heavy vehicles, are currently addressed through a suite of tools including general rates, New Zealand Transport Authority subsidies and District Plan controls. The unique role that District Plan controls play is that they can capture specific activities and effects.

The current District Plan requires compensation from landowners where heavy vehicles have caused damage to roading at the points of entry onto the public roading system. While this compensation has been required, it is limited to funding repair of the access only. With regard to activities which require resource consent, such as quarrying, there are issues as to the extent that consent conditions can limit the routes taken by trucks, their number and frequency and whether financial contributions towards repair and upgrade works can be required.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) retain the current District Plan provisions to pay compensation for repair of damage to roading infrastructure at the points or entry onto a public road; (ii) include rules in the District Plan that require resource consent for new activities likely to result in damage to roads; or (ii) require an up-front payment for road maintenance and repair when a new activity generates a specified number of heavy traffic movements.