

Topic 13: Rural Residential Areas

Introduction

As part of the District Plan Review, Timaru District Council has commissioned a Discussion Document on rural residential areas 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 residential areas, 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 provide a structured and zoned approach to the provision of rural residential opportunities?

Rural residential development in this context generally includes land holdings that range in size from 5,000m² to 2ha with a rural outlook for lifestyle living in the District. Such development has historically occurred on an ad-hoc basis, resulting in 'poppy seed' development throughout the District's Rural Zones. Creating more intensive subdivisions in the Rural Zone has raised the expectations of landowners that Council and the District ratepayers will provide for connections to publicly funded infrastructure services. This does not align with Council policy on servicing because it is inefficient to expand the size and scale of urban services to service rural residential areas. Other issues include impacts on productive rural land use, managing conflicts between lawfully operating productive rural uses and occupants of lifestyle blocks (reverse sensitivity effects), a reduction in rural character and natural landscape values, and the generation of unsustainable vehicle movements.

The Canterbury Regional Council has taken a harder line to dispersed rural residential development in the Region. The Regional Council seeks that all districts in the Canterbury region provide a more directive approach to rural residential development, concentrating rural residential development adjacent to existing urban areas.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) retain the current District Plan dispersed 'rural living approach', including specific zones for Rural 4A Zone (Geraldine Downs) and the Rural Residential (Brookfield Road) Zone; or (ii) amend the District Plan to include a rural residential zone framework for land adjacent to Timaru, Geraldine, Pleasant Point and Temuka, through replacing the current dispersed rural living approach with a more targeted zoned approach.

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

We welcome your feedback on this topic.

Peter Burt
Timaru Ward Councillor





Issue 2

How should the amenity and characteristics of a rural residential zone be managed?

A key aspect of managing rural residential development opportunities is housing density. Land holdings that range in size from between 0.5ha to 2ha are better able to demonstrate the residential and rural character elements that typify rural residential environments. Properties that are greater than 2ha in size generally continue to be productive and are predominantly retained for rural purposes, small holdings or hobby farms.

Occupiers of rural residential blocks typically anticipate a quiet and pleasant semi-rural environment, where they are not unduly affected by close neighbours or the noise and activity associated with urban areas. The maintenance of amenity values and the pattern of rural residential development consistent with the expectations of residents is crucial.

These ideals conflict with the realities of modern working farm life. Rural activities can involve emissions, vibrations, earthworks, spray drift, stock movements and other effects associated with primary production. Existing and anticipated rural uses should be protected from more sensitive rural residential activities.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) retain the current District Plan dispersed 'rural living approach', including specific zones for Rural 4A Zone (Geraldine Downs) and the Rural Residential (Brookfield Road) Zone. The development controls are framed on the outcomes for the Rural Zone, which are not seeking more intensive land holdings; or (ii) amend the District Plan to provide an explicit policy direction and rule framework for all identified rural residential zones to manage their: development (building height, scale, setbacks, compliance with outline development plans, limitations on footpaths and street lighting); subdivision (minimum and average lot sizes); and relationship to rural uses (zoning and setbacks from intensive farming operations).