



YOUR PLAN OUR FUTURE
TIMARU DISTRICT PLAN REVIEW
LAND USE PLAN

Timaru District Plan Review

Topic 13

Rural Residential Areas

Discussion Document, December 2016



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Timaru District Council has commissioned this report to identify the 'issues' with how the Timaru District Plan 2005 manages rural residential areas. The report subsequently identifies the potential 'options' to address these issues and the strengths and weaknesses of each option.

Please note that land use growth is being dealt with in the Timaru District 2045 Draft Growth Management Strategy.

The report is intended to inform and provide a basis for public consultation on this matter and to some degree stimulate debate. The report forms part of a suite of public consultation measures that may be used to inform a potential change to the District Plan.

1.2 Report Format

The remainder of the report has been set out as follows:

- Section 2** identifies and describes the issue.
- Section 3** summarises the relevant statutory matters.
- Section 4** briefly explains the current Timaru District Plan approach to rural residential areas.
- Section 5** discusses some potential options to deal with rural residential areas.

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

We welcome your feedback on this topic.

Peter Burt
Timaru Ward Councillor

2.0 Issue Identification

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 of less than 2ha 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 largest concentration of rural residential development in the District adjoins the Timaru township, followed by Temuka, Geraldine, and then Pleasant Point.

The current District Plan approach results in an incremental and ad-hoc development of rural residential blocks and rural lifestyle throughout the rural zones. A continuation of that approach gives no certainty as to where rural residential development should occur. Nor does it promote alignment with District settlements, or integration with the District transport infrastructure.

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. Too small, and the resulting intensive densities are indistinguishable from urban settlement patterns, and there may be resultant expectations as to infrastructure servicing and community facilities. Too large and the resultant patterns of development become an inefficient use of the productive land resource and become unwieldy for those seeking lifestyle opportunities rather than wanting to undertake active farming activities.

Land holdings that range in size from between 0.5ha to 2ha are able to demonstrate the residential and rural character elements that typify rural residential environments. They are also demonstrably larger than the median urban allotment size in Timaru, Pleasant Point, Temuka and Geraldine which range from 700m² to 1,000m². 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.

Whilst housing density is the key determinant of expectations of the character of rural residential areas, the size of such development areas and the connection to surrounding rural landscapes are also critical aspects of rural residential amenity. Large areas of rural residential development can become more suburban in character as boundary plantings and shelterbelts become established and sections lose views to more extensive rural farming landscapes.

The maintenance of amenity values and the pattern of development consistent with the expectations of inhabitants is crucial in ensuring that the values that make these areas desirable are not diminished by inappropriate activities, or inappropriately placed developments. This requires consideration of a range of in-zone performance standards, for example:

- Open space and views – including setbacks from the road and boundaries.
- Open rural style fencing rather than solid suburban fencing.
- Dominance of structures – including building heights and the scale of buildings on a site.
- Appearance – in terms of landscaping and building design.
- General amenity – including limitations on noise, lighting and non-residential activities. A general avoidance of manicured grass berms, footpaths, or extensive street lighting.

3.0 Statutory Matters

- Farming practices – there are opportunities for domestic livestock and pets, but not practical opportunities for economically productive farming activity which requires larger landholdings. Restrictions on intensive farming practices (piggeries, poultry) would be required to avoid nuisance effects.

There are varying perceptions of what life in rural areas should be like. However, 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.

These ideals conflict with the realities of modern working farm life. The Rural Zones Discussion Document (Topic 12) outlines the working environment and functional qualities of the rural zones that support agriculture, productive land use and agricultural industries (for example Clondeboy). Rural activities can involve emissions, vibrations, earthworks, spray drift, stock movements and other effects associated with primary production. It is important to recognise and protect established and anticipated rural activities from more sensitive rural residential activities which would give rise to amenity conflicts and reverse sensitivity effects. Dwelling setbacks in the rural residential zone would need to be established to protect intensive farming operations undertaken within the Rural Zones.

Resource Management Act 1991

The Resource Management Act 1991 does not provide explicit guidance on the management of rural residential development. The Council needs to manage and protect respective matters of National importance, such as the natural character of the coastal environment, or outstanding natural features and landscapes, which are located in the District's rural areas. Additionally, the Council needs to provide appropriate opportunities for rural residential development in conjunction with methods to ensure that the poor outcomes and related adverse effects on the natural and physical resources, amenity values and quality of the environment are avoided, remedied or mitigated.

Canterbury Regional Policy Statement 2013

The Canterbury Regional Policy Statement 2013 requires the Council (and other territorial authorities in the Region) to take a more co-ordinated and restrictive approach to rural residential development. Rural residential development is to be subservient to residential opportunities in terms of meeting the District's wider growth needs and providing concentrated urban areas. Locations for rural residential development are also to be primarily of a form that concentrates or is attached to existing urban areas.

The Regional Policy Statement defines rural residential development as "zoned residential development outside or on the fringes of urban areas which provides for primarily low density residential activities, ancillary activities and associated infrastructure". This identifies that rural residential activities in the District should be implemented only by way of a zoned response.

4.0 Timaru District Plan

The current District Plan Rural 1 Zone requires rural allotments to have a minimum area of 40ha. There is however a significant exemption provided for the 'rural living approach' which provides for rural living allotments as follows:

Site Size	Entitlement
More than 10 hectares but not more than 20 hectares	1 new rural living site*
More than 20 hectares but not more than 40 hectares	2 new rural living sites and 2 allotments of 10 hectares minimum area, provided that the area of the balance land is not less than 10 hectares
More than 40 hectares	3 new rural living sites and 3 allotments of 10 hectares minimum area, provided that the area of the balance land is not less than 10 hectares

*rural living sites minimum of 1000m²

This 'rural living approach' has applied to any title in the Rural 1 Zone in existence from the 27 August 1988.

The objectives and policies of the District Plan seek a cohesive approach to the provision of rural activities and character, which is not aligned with the approach that provides for ad-hoc rural residential development in the rules.

Bespoke rural residential opportunities exist in the District, such as the Rural 4A Zone (Geraldine Downs) that includes a rural residential sub zone providing for minimum lot sizes down to 2ha, and on two identified lots down to 5,000m². Furthermore, a private plan change request created the Rural Residential (Brookfield Road) Zone adjoining the Timaru urban boundary, providing for minimum lot size of 5,000m² in area.

5.0 Options

The main options to manage rural residential areas are summarised as:

- Status quo (i.e. retain the current District Plan approach).
- Amend (i.e. current District Plan approach requires amendment to align it with current best practice and to give effect to regional planning documents).

These options are briefly described in turn below, followed by a brief assessment of their strengths and weaknesses.

Please note other options exist for the identified issues that have not been reflected here to keep the document concise.

Option 1 – Status quo

Continuation of the current District Plan dispersed 'rural living approach', including specific zones for Rural 4A Zone (Geraldine Downs) and the Rural Residential (Brookfield Road) Zone.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Retention of the dispersed 'rural living approach', including specific zones for Rural 4A Zone (Geraldine Downs) and the Rural Residential (Brookfield Road) Zone would retain landowner's current District Plan opportunities.▪ Enables a broad range of rural residential locational choices.▪ Familiarity for the community and development industry in terms of the outcomes and regulation associated with the current District Plan approach.▪ Retains the co-ordinated and planned framework for enabling rural residential opportunities at the Rural 4A Zone (Geraldine Downs) and the Rural Residential (Brookfield Road) Zone in context with the zone characteristics.▪ The Rural 4A Zone (Geraldine Downs) and the Rural Residential (Brookfield Road) Zone gives effect to the Regional Policy Statement that directs Council to concentrate rural residential development adjacent to existing urban areas.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The dispersed 'rural living approach' does not give effect to the Regional Policy Statement, which directs Council to concentrate rural residential development to areas adjoining existing urban areas.▪ Continuation of the dispersed rural residential subdivisions through the Rural 1 Zone would be contrary to the clear intentions of the rural objectives and policies within the District Plan, diminishing the integrity of those provisions.▪ Enables continued fragmentation of land for rural production, except for Rural 4A Zone (Geraldine Downs) and the Rural Residential (Brookfield Road) Zone.▪ Does not manage conflicts between lawfully operating productive rural uses and occupants of rural residential areas, except for Rural 4A Zone (Geraldine Downs) and the Rural Residential (Brookfield Road) Zone.▪ Creates a reduction in rural character, amenity and natural landscape values, except for Rural 4A Zone (Geraldine Downs) and the Rural Residential (Brookfield Road) Zone.▪ The dispersed approach can potentially compromise traffic safety and convenience on major traffic routes by the creation of additional vehicle accesses for rural residential development.▪ Increase in the potential for reverse sensitivity adverse effects of rural residential development from accepted impacts generated by farming, factory farming and rural industrial activities such as noise, dust and odour.▪ The potential of intensive rural residential development to create public health or environmental problems through on-site disposal of wastes and to adversely affect ecologically sensitive areas.

Option 2 – Amend

The current District Plan approach requires amendment to align it with current best practice and to give effect to regional planning documents as follows:

- Delete the existing dispersed 'rural living approach' and replace it with a targeted rural residential zone framework for land adjacent to Timaru, Geraldine, Pleasant Point and Temuka. The Rural 4A Zone (Geraldine Downs) and the Rural Residential (Brookfield Road) Zone will be retained within the next District Plan.
- Provide a policy framework and rules relating to the maintenance of amenity values, character and a pattern of development in the rural residential zones. Provisions would be required for: building height; scale of buildings; establishment of non-residential activities; setbacks from roads and boundaries; extent of impervious surfaces; minimum and average lot sizes; the need to conform to a structure or outline development plan for the management of stormwater, provision of roading networks, and preservation of important features; and limitations on footpaths and street lighting.
- Provide for a policy framework and rules for rural residential activities to avoid reverse sensitivity effects on established or anticipated activities undertaken in the adjoining Rural Zones. Provisions would be required for: setbacks from intensive farming operations; and management of noise impacts.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gives effect to the Regional Policy Statement that directs Council to concentrate rural residential development adjacent to existing urban areas. ▪ Greater certainty as to the location and choice of rural residential opportunities for land owners and the market. ▪ Ability to identify and manage interface issues of reverse sensitivity and retain rural character and amenity. ▪ Provides rural residential housing opportunities adjoining existing settlements which provides for transport efficiencies. ▪ At a community level provides options for rural residential development opportunities which are much more coordinated and cohesive than the current dispersed 'rural living approach'. ▪ Reduces the potential for ad-hoc rural land fragmentation, and the extent of rural land used for non-productive or less efficient rural use. ▪ Provides increased certainty that public infrastructure will not be provided to service rural residential developments, but ensures minimum standards are achieved to avoid issues associated with stormwater and sewage disposal. ▪ Increased certainty associated with the amenity and character expectations within the rural residential zones. ▪ Retention of important natural features, and integration with transport networks and stormwater management through the provision of structure / outline development plans for substantial rural residential developments. ▪ Management of reverse sensitivity effects on established or anticipated rural activities at the interface between Rural Zones and rural residential zones. ▪ Prevention of inappropriate activities and associated effects from developments within the rural residential zone.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individual dis-benefit from the removal of dispersed 'rural living approach' throughout the rural zone. ▪ Small reduction in choice, as specific locations are zoned to accommodate rural residential developments (although these would be provided adjoining a number of settlements in the District). ▪ Increased compliance and regulatory costs associated with undertaking developments within the rural residential zones. ▪ Council may need to consider staging or deferring development to ensure that a consolidation approach to growth is maintained for the District.

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