



YOUR PLAN OUR FUTURE
TIMARU DISTRICT PLAN REVIEW
LAND USE PLAN

Timaru District Plan Review

Topic 15

Commercial Zones

Discussion Document, December 2016



TIMARU
TDC
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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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 commercial zones. 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 Draft 2045 Growth Management Strategy. The Council is not seeking feedback on potential new commercial areas as part of this discussion document. That will be sought during consultation on the 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 commercial zones.
- Section 5** discusses some potential options to deal with commercial zones.

This document outlines the issues our district faces in relation to commercial zones.

We welcome your feedback on this topic.

Peter Burt
Timaru Ward Councillor

2.0 Issue Identification

Timaru District has a range of commercial centres; the town centres at Geraldine, Pleasant Point, Temuka and Timaru; smaller shopping centres at Ashbury, Le Cren / Wilson Street and Highfield; a large format retail precinct at former A&P Showgrounds site; and a number of small scale local convenience neighbourhood shops in the suburbs of Timaru.

The District's Commercial Zones will need to respond to a variety of challenges. These include demographic changes in the District population; enabling a greater variety of compatible activities to ensure resilient town centres (for example providing for appropriate residential and visitor accommodation alongside cafes, shops and offices); providing for a high quality of new development; and promoting reinvestment and reuse of existing buildings.

Commercial areas, particularly the Geraldine, Pleasant Point, Temuka and Timaru town centres are a significant resource, and play an important role in providing for the economic and social well-being of the District.

Issue 1

Should the District Plan provide a clearer distinction between town centres, and supporting commercial zones (the commercial centre hierarchy), and be more directive in terms of where commercial activity should be located?

While the current District Plan provides a range of Commercial Zones, an issue with this approach has been ensuring that the provisions consolidate commercial activity in the appropriate areas. The District Plan does not clearly articulate the role and function of each commercial zone, and the importance of the Timaru town centre in terms of its retail, civic and social role and outcomes.

There is likely to be sufficient opportunities for commercial activity to be accommodated in the existing town centres over the next 20 years. A planning approach that enables new commercial development across the District risks diffusing investment away from the current town centres. It increases the risks of adversely affecting their amenity and vitality, and over time, decreasing their importance. The extent of the Commercial Zone to the south end of Stafford Street may be diluting the vibrancy of the core retail centre in Timaru.

Putting more emphasis on consolidating the existing commercial areas increases investment certainty, and confidence in the existing centres and buildings. This is important in the Timaru District context given modest projected population growth, the extent of commercially zoned land supply (including consented but not yet built developments) and the under-utilisation of the existing retail floorspace. A more consolidated approach would also help protect the heritage character of Timaru and Temuka town centres.

Issue 2

Do the Commercial Zones enable a diverse range and mix of activities to promote vitality and viability?

The current District Plan has limitations on the scale and type of commercial activities in each of the Commercial Zones.

Some of these limitations are warranted to ensure town centre viability, for example the restrictions on small retail premises in the "large format" retail zone. More sensitive activities locating in the town centres are also managed to ensure they are compatible with the noise, amenity and character, and to avoid effects from noise, glare, late night activity) on adjoining Residential Zones.

The next District Plan could consider whether there is a more consistent approach to managing the range of activities provided for in the District's town centres. For example restaurants and licenced premises are not provided for in the Pleasant Point Commercial Zone, but are provided in other town centres. Having more consistent activity standards could encourage a wider range of activities in town centres, increasing their use and vitality, while still avoiding adverse impacts on other activities and managing nuisance at Residential Zone boundaries.

Issue 3

Balancing consenting requirements with encouraging reinvestment

There are areas of the town centres, for example Stafford Street south of George Street, or portions of King Street, Temuka where reinvestment and redevelopment would be beneficial. However, complex or uncertain requirements in the District Plan may be hindering reinvestment and an increase in activities. Urban design requirements, or rules requiring provision of off-street car parks can have a big impact on the viability of commercial developments.

There are also overlapping requirements in the District Plan. For example resource consents are required for the design of all new buildings. The District Plan also has standards for the size and form for town centre buildings, the extent of glazed windows at street level, and verandahs. The next District Plan could streamline these planning regulations, and provide more certainty about what built form outcomes are appropriate in the town centres.

Conversely too little management of development may result in those town centre character qualities that the District communities love being slowly eroded.

There needs to be a balanced approach to requirements such as urban design and car parking requirements. Urban design should increase the desired qualities of commercial centres, but provisions should be certain and easily understood. Car-parking requirements should be based on actual levels of demand, and the extent to which suitable car parking or other transport modes are available in the surrounding area. Promoting commercial development in the District's commercial centres and ensuring the community has access to a wide range of goods and services are the primary considerations.

Issue 4

Should the District Plan provide for heritage character recognition for part of the Timaru town centre main street?

The extent and character of heritage buildings in the District town centres greatly enhances the identity and character of the District's town centres.

There are particular clusters of heritage buildings located within the Timaru town centre that are a significant asset and contribute to the unique identity for Timaru. In particular, there are recognisable areas in Strathallan Street, Stafford Street and Cains Terrace, and Stafford Street from George Street to Woollcombe Street.

Retaining, enhancing and celebrating Timaru's historic built heritage provides an opportunity to further grow and distinguish the Timaru town centre, both in terms of its local amenity and character, but also as a tourist and heritage destination.

Issues associated with heritage protection are identified in Topic 6: Heritage Values Discussion Document. That topic outlines the manner in which further economic development and enablement is to be balanced against heritage protection for individual buildings. However, District Plan rules for the Commercial Zones can also recognise and work towards enhancing the existing heritage character and ensure sympathetic design for any redevelopment within identified areas in the town centres. Any provisions would need to be balanced against discouraging reinvestment.

3.0 Statutory Matters

Resource Management Act 1991

The Resource Management Act 1991 gives very general guidance as to what it expects for the management of the built environment. What is clear is that the Act clearly anticipates that structures, as part of the built environment (which includes as a matter of course Timaru's District town centres and their interrelationship with buildings, community facilities, the road network and adjoining efforts to intensify residential densities) represent physical resources that need to be managed and developed in a sustainable way so as to enable people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural well-being.

Canterbury Regional Policy Statement 2013

The Canterbury Regional Policy Statement 2013 directs the Council to establish an approach for the integrated management of urban development (including commercial development). The Regional Policy Statement seeks consolidated, well designed and sustainable growth in and around urban areas, whilst encouraging business activities in appropriate locations. Importantly reverse sensitivity effects and effects between incompatible activities are to be avoided or mitigated.

4.0 Timaru District Plan

The current District Plan provides for the main retail areas of Geraldine, Pleasant Point, Temuka as Commercial 1 Zones; and Timaru under the Commercial 1A Zone. A broad range of commercial activities are enabled in these zones, and there are substantial controls as to both achieving high quality built form outcomes, car parking requirements and managing adverse effects such as noise and signage. Within the Timaru Commercial 1A Zone a more intensive and attractive pedestrian orientated environment is sought.

The Commercial 1B and 1C Zones as applied to the Timaru town centre apply to the fringe areas. In these areas there is less emphasis on a high level of urban design and the need to enable larger footprint retail activities, such as The Warehouse and Countdown fronting Browne Street. These activities are not as intensive or do not fit easily into the historic Stafford Street main street.

The suburban shopping centres in Timaru are represented by the Commercial 2 Zone as located at Ashbury, Le Cren and Wilson Street and Highfield. That zoning provides for village type shopping centres, where a supermarket 'and five friends' (smaller shops) provide for the more localised convenience needs of the surrounding community.

A large format retail complex is provided by the Commercial 2A Zone at the historic A&P Showgrounds site. That zoning precludes smaller retail and office activities from establishing, which stops this area mimicking and detracting from the Timaru town centre. The extent of up-take is non-existent to date.

Lastly, a number of smaller neighbourhood shops, such as dairies and take away foods, are provided for by the Commercial 3 Zone in the Timaru urban area.

The current District Plan also seeks to discourage the establishment of 'core' retail activities (being those critical shops which strengthen town centres, such as restaurants, supermarkets, clothing stores and electronic stores) within the Industrial Zones of the District, and prevent large scale non-residential activities from establishing in Residential Zones. These controls seek to direct commercial activity into the District town centres to ensure they remain vibrant and attractive shopping destinations, as well as discouraging these activities establishing in industrial and Residential Zones which are not conducive to the character and expectations of the District shopping public.

5.0 Options

The main options to manage commercial zones are summarised as:

- Status quo (i.e. retain certain aspects in the current District Plan approach).
- Amend (i.e. the current District Plan approach requires amendment to align it with current best practice).

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

The following strategic approach in the current District Plan is still relevant and should be included in the next District Plan:

- Zoning approach that distinguishes between core, fringe, suburban, large format and convenience retail areas to enable commercial activities into specific locations.

Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Zoning areas to enable commercial activity within specific areas of the District provides for the agglomeration of these activities and the social and economic benefits they provide to the community.▪ The community and development industry are familiar with the Council's approach.▪ The current District Plan approach provides some direction as to facilitating certain commercial activities into suitable areas, such as removing the prospect of smaller scale shops within the A&P Showgrounds site Commercial 2A Zone or requiring intensive pedestrian orientated – higher amenity activities within the Commercial 1 or Commercial 1A Zones.▪ Zoning based on the characteristics of specific commercial activities and desired community outcomes provides the basis to address potential adverse effects, and seeks to retain high quality urban design and amenity for more prominent and intensively used areas.▪ Is enabling for all types of commercial activity that benefits community well-being, choice, and health and safety.▪ Is generally reflective of what commercial activities are present on the ground.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Some overlap between the functions, amenity and activities present in the Timaru Commercial 1A and 1B Zones that diffuses core commercial and pedestrian activities.▪ The hierarchy of commercial centres and the importance of reinforcing and strengthening the role and function of the town centres in particular is weak.▪ The primacy of the Timaru town centre (Commercial 1A, 1B and 1C Zones) is not expressed.▪ The transport function and benefits of strong commercial centres in terms of safe and efficient functioning and accessibility is not expressed.▪ There are strong provisions recognising and providing for the character and amenity of town centre activities, but no policy recognition of the need to encourage redevelopment (and agglomeration) of town centre properties (Commercial 1 and Commercial 1A Zones).

Option 2 – Amend

The intent of the strategic approach in the current District Plan is still valid but the approach requires amendment to align it with current best practice:

- Include a clear commercial hierarchy with the rural town centres of Temuka, Geraldine, and Pleasant Point recognising for the role and function they play for their local communities, and Timaru fulfilling a broader role being the main centre for the South Canterbury area.
- Amend policy to focus commercial redevelopment and growth into established commercial areas.
- Amend the roles and boundaries of Timaru Commercial 1B and 1C Zones to provide opportunities for revitalisation and support for the Timaru town centre. This is in response to some of the activities within the Timaru Commercial 1B and 1C Zone boundaries portraying inner city (Commercial 1A Zone) characteristics, while others have more of an industrial or large format trade based role (such as Mitre10).
- Include a policy framework to encourage a broad range of commercial and supporting activities (such as residential) to enhance the town centres as vibrant and interesting places.
- Include a policy framework and rules that encourage the redevelopment (and agglomeration) of town centre properties to accommodate new activities and investment.
- Delete provisions that result in duplication of Council regulation regarding urban design and built form outcomes or result in unnecessary consenting requirements, and refine provisions where these would create uncertainty, or inappropriately reduce opportunities for redevelopment.
- Consider establishing in the Timaru town centre Commercial 1A Zone 'heritage character areas' associated with commercial blocks that exhibit a specific heritage character and design, such as Strathallan Street, Stafford Street and Cains Terrace, and Stafford Street from George Street to Woollcombe Street. Consenting requirements for demolitions / new builds in these areas would be retained.
- Consider removing consenting requirements for demolitions / new builds outside identified 'heritage character areas' in the Timaru town centre Commercial 1A Zone. Amenity would be managed through bulk, location, and active frontage provisions.

Strengths

- Being directive as to the location and consolidation of commercial activity would be more aligned with the direction of the Regional Policy Statement.
- Greater certainty as to the form and location of commercial activity through a strong centres hierarchy and consolidation provides for the agglomeration of activity in the town centres which enhances overall community well-being, accessibility and choice through critical mass.
- Identifying primacy of the Timaru town centre enhances its identity, provides greater protections against out-of-centre retail (distributional effects) and recognises co-location of assorted community and civic activities and infrastructure.
- Identifying appropriate sub-zone distinctions (Commercial 1A, Commercial 1B and Commercial 1C Zones) provides greater amenity and location expectations as to form, scale and types of retail activities located within the Timaru town centre.
- Increased certainty associated with the considerable town centre private and public investment, including infrastructure, community services and facilities, and amenity improvements.
- Increased certainty associated with the considerable private and public investment, including infrastructure, community services and facilities, and amenity improvements.
- Support for a wider range of activities within the town centres, which increases not only reinvestment opportunities, but also enhances the vitality of centres.
- Removing overlapping regulations in terms of built form and urban design outcomes (verandahs, active frontage requirements, building demolition / erection) decreases compliance costs and act as an incentive to reinvestment.
- Remove / recognise current land use patterns to provide a more effective requirement for car parking to act as an incentive to reinvestment.

Strengths continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved certainty to larger format retail types (supermarkets, department stores) that there is policy support for in-centre expansions where this would require agglomerating properties or not achieve absolute consistency with the District Plan requirements for urban design or parking. ▪ The Commercial 1B and 1C Zones provide for a wide range of development opportunities, with lesser amenity related regulation, so as to encourage a mixed and diverse range of activities within the Timaru town centre. ▪ Reduction in the number of consent requirements associated with urban design requirements, and increased certainty in terms of outcomes. ▪ Targeted design based controls to be applied as limited to identified 'heritage character areas'. ▪ Increased certainty and reinvestment for demolitions / new builds outside identified 'heritage character areas'. ▪ Recognition of specific 'heritage character areas' provides increased focus for the Council in terms of providing public realm improvements to match reinvestment, and also the production of guidelines as to façade and design outcomes sought. ▪ Reduction in the number of resource consent requirements for demolitions / new builds outside identified 'heritage character areas' in the Timaru town centre Commercial 1A Zone.
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current District Plan approach whilst weak is delivering relatively positive environmental outcomes. ▪ A more directive consolidation approach reduces flexibility to facilitate the development of commercial, recreational and social infrastructure out of town centres, which is most likely to reduce certainty for existing out-of-centre developments. ▪ Not all retail activities are appropriate in town centres (such as trade based suppliers, yard based suppliers and automotive yards). Some flexibility would be required to provide for these activities in the Industrial L Zone. ▪ Establishing primacy for the Timaru town centre could be interpreted as depreciating the important role and function that the other town centres provide for their communities. ▪ Redefining the boundaries of differentiated sub-zones (and associated provisions) can provide additional compliance costs (such as requirements for verandahs, provision of window display areas, and the range of permitted activities), especially to those businesses already established in these areas and seeking to redevelop. ▪ Increased potential for outcomes which result in poor building design, heights, and layouts which don't interact with, or are in context with the streetscape. ▪ Clarity is needed to determine and define boundaries of 'heritage character areas'. ▪ Potential for overlap, duplication and increased compliance costs where individual buildings are protected under the next District Plan heritage provisions. ▪ Can cause redirection of investment away from 'heritage character areas' where consenting requirements are unduly onerous.



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