

Rural Areas Issues and Options

The Council is currently undertaking a review of the Queenstown Lakes District Plan.

We are required to review the plan, under the Resource Management Act, every ten years to keep it up to date, effective and relevant. The current Queenstown Lakes District Plan was largely written in the late 1990s and early 2000s, with most of it becoming operative in 2003.

The Council has now started to review the Plan, with particular focus on the older parts, which have not been subject to more recent plan changes.

This paper is one of a series being issued throughout the Review and addresses **issues and options for the rural areas** of the District.

We're asking for your thoughts on these.



HOW HAVE WE IDENTIFIED ISSUES AND OPTIONS?

Council used the following methods for identifying issues with how the District Plan relates to rural areas:

- District Plan Monitoring - The relevant monitoring reports are available on the QLDC website: www qldc govt nz/monitoring
- Ongoing examination of relevant Environment Court decisions
- Initial consultation with key stakeholders
- Public consultation on Rural Subdivision held in 2010
- Consideration of how the current provisions align with other Council strategies and known community aspirations
- An examination of the implications of changes to the Resource Management Act, recent National Policy Statements and National Environmental Standards.



The Council has identified what it thinks are the key issues and the three options available to it for the review process. These are:

- Leave the plan unaltered
- Make refinements to the plan
- Undertake a comprehensive overhaul of the plan.

For rural matters, we consider that the current plan does not require a comprehensive review but could be built on and improved.

Here are the main themes and issues we have identified and what we are currently considering as ways forward.

We are seeking your feedback on these.

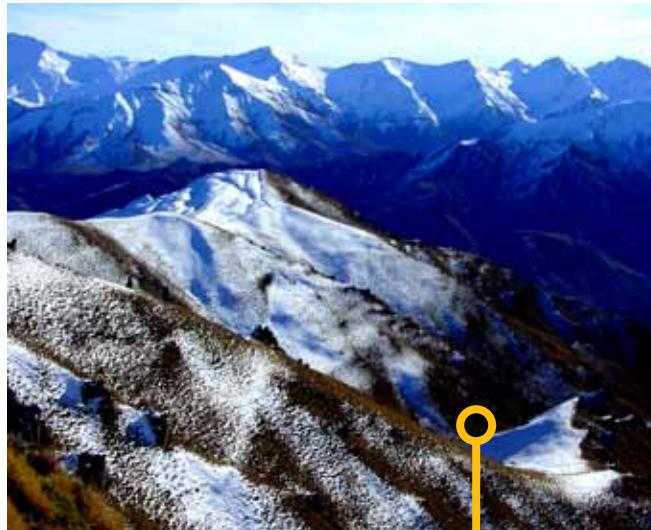


rural areas - issues and options

WHAT ARE THE KEY THEMES?



Enabling farming and other rural activities



Protection of rural landscape.



Accommodating development where appropriate.

WHAT ISSUES AND OPTIONS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED?

1 Management of Residential Subdivision in the Rural General Zone

The purpose of the Rural General Zone is to manage activities so they can be carried out in a way that protects and enhances nature conservation and landscape values.

Under the current District Plan, the Council has the discretion over the granting of consent for any proposals to create new residential lots by subdividing parcels of land in the Rural General Zone. To determine how new residential properties will sit in the landscape, any application for this type of subdivision requires the identification of a building platform, i.e. a specific area within the proposed subdivision where buildings will be located.

Each application for this type of subdivision is therefore assessed on its merits against a set of criteria contained in the plan, the principal aim of which is to ensure that development is absorbed into the landscape in an appropriate manner. The Plan broadly categorises the differing landscapes of the district to assist in this approach.

The following issues have been identified in relation to how the Plan currently manages residential subdivision in the Rural General Zone:

- The current approach lacks certainty and provisions are complex and lacking in clarity. As a consequence, a significant number of consents have been decided upon via costly appeals at the Environment Court.
- The current provisions focus on landscape matters but do not address other growth management matters such as the implications for infrastructure provision within the District.
- The landscape areas used to assess the proposals are not fully defined.

- The District Plan provisions do not fully reflect the relative importance of the different landscape categories.
- The cumulative impact of the subdivisions is difficult to control.
- There is already a high level of existing dwelling and platform supply, particularly in areas of high demand
 - Wakatipu Basin – approximately 580 existing dwellings with over a further 400 consented building platforms that have yet to be built on *
 - Wanaka surrounds - approximately 180 existing dwellings with a further 110 consented building platforms. *

*as of March 2010

- The current plan provisions allows for flexibility in approach with the aim of ensuring that new development sits in the landscape (and therefore also allows for clustering of units), but as a result these provisions can also deliver residential development at a similar or greater intensity than that sought and provided for in Rural Lifestyle and Rural Residential zones (i.e. those areas where the Plan provides for residential development to be provided in the rural area).



The discretionary regime for subdivision in the Rural General Zone has been, on balance, reasonably successful in managing the landscape effects of individual subdivision applications. However, the system is complex, lacks certainty and doesn't address growth management, sustainability of infrastructure and cumulative impact matters effectively. Improvements could be made to the Plan to provide greater clarity and ensure better outcomes.

By retaining and refining the current approach the following improvements could provide greater clarity and certainty:

- Landscape Matters:
 - Provide definition as to the extent of the various landscape areas
 - Provide greater direction on appropriate mitigation measures
 - Review assessment of cumulative impact
 - Clarify landscape objectives
 - Revise landscape category provisions to ensure clear hierarchy of landscape protection
- Possible introduction of an appropriate minimum lot size
- Limit number of dwellings per building platform
- Revise to ensure greater clarity and consistency
- General revision of Definitions, Objectives, Policies and Rules to remove repetition, to provide greater clarity and to ensure increased consistency.

The current plan provisions for the rural area differ for the different landscape areas. Similarly, differing approaches could be taken to those parts of the rural area where differing development pressures are faced. For example, we could explore the possibility of more focussed provisions for specific localised areas and high demand areas, in order to address the cumulative impact of residential development:

- Wakatipu Basin: There is a high concentration of subdivision activity with the potential for over-domestication due to the cumulative impact of increasing numbers of residential properties appearing in the rural landscape.
- Wanaka Surrounds: This is another area of relatively high demand. Although lower in number than in the Wakatipu Basin, there is a significant number already consented but unbuilt, with development pressure concentrated on the south side of Wanaka and by the lake.
- The High Country/Outstanding Natural Landscapes: There is less pressure for subdivisions but these are more sensitive locations where development can have significant landscape and infrastructure implications.



Do you agree the issues raised need to be reviewed?
Are there any other issues?
Do you consider this approach to be suitable?
Are there other approaches that you consider to be preferable?



See the back page for a feedback form or email us at services@qldc.govt.nz with your thoughts.

2 Management of Residential Subdivision in the Rural Lifestyle and Rural Residential Zones

These are zones identified where residential development within the rural area is considered appropriate. Overall, there is a plentiful supply of Rural Residential and particularly Rural Lifestyle development opportunities throughout the District.

The following issues have been identified in relation to the Rural Lifestyle and Rural Residential Zones:

- Some of this zoned land is in areas that are isolated and are;
 - Not as appealing to the market as those located closer to the main urban areas and have therefore remained largely undeveloped
 - In locations that are subject to potential hazard
 - The amount of land zoned for these activities is of a scale which significantly over-provides for those more remote areas.
- Development in some of the zoned areas located in more remote parts of the District could result in a potential detrimental “domesticating” effect on the wider rural landscape.
- Some Rural Residential zones, located on the edge of urban areas are delivering development more urban than rural in character. In particular, Rural Residential zoned land close to existing settlements has been subdivided to a density more associated with urban areas rather than that anticipated in these rural zones.
- These zones are supposed to be self-sufficient in terms of water and sewage provision, however in many cases, this is not occurring.

These zones provide for a managed approach to rural residential development in identified locations throughout the district. However, without changing the plan, issues such as potential domestication and oversupply in the more remote, high value landscape areas, or in areas with potential hazard risks and the increasing urbanisation of rural residential zones on the edge of existing settlements would remain.



Improvements can be made that can provide greater clarity and certainty as to what future outcomes are anticipated in these zones. These are:

- Revision of Objectives and Policies to provide greater clarity as to the role of these zones and what is expected to occur within them. In particular, provision of a clear policy linkage to any new District Wide Strategic Growth Management Objectives and Policies to help define the role of these zones as part of an overall approach to the District and the rural area.
- Revision of provisions to ensure greater clarity and robustness in terms of development densities, anticipated infrastructure self-sufficiency requirements and integration with landscape values.
- Review of zoned areas (and their provisions) which could be subject to hazard risk.
- Review of potentially arbitrary zone boundaries.

To address the issues of potential over-supply in the more remote, high value landscape areas, and to consider those zones which have now become urban rather than rural in terms of their density and character, a full review of the zones would need to be undertaken with the aim of:

- potentially returning those zones in more remote locations with high value landscape values (and where there has been no subdivision consent activity) to the Rural General Zone.
- giving consideration to redefining those zones which are more urban in character as urban zones (e.g. low density zones or other).



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Are there any other issues?
Do you consider this approach to be suitable?
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3 Agriculture, Viticulture and Forestry Activities.

Farming, vineyards and forestry are predominantly rural activities. The District Plan accordingly generally seeks to enable farming, viticulture and forestry activities in the rural area. However, the following issues have been identified and require attention through the review:

- Potential reverse sensitivity issues arising from residential subdivision.
- Provisions seeking to control visual impact of large structures require review and clarification to reflect current farming requirements and any review of provisions relating to landscape protection.
- Vegetation clearance provisions.
- Possible implications around the introduction of dairying.
- Control of wilding species.

A range of relatively minor improvements could be made to the Plan. Generally, the research undertaken to date suggests that the plan provisions for these activities do not need a major overhaul but can be improved to provide greater clarity, reflect current practice and ensure better outcomes. These improvements would include:

- Provisions which seek to control the visual impact of large structures require review to provide greater clarity and to reflect current farming requirements.
- Vegetation clearance provisions need to be considered alongside those provisions relating to significant indigenous vegetation protection to form a clear and comprehensive approach.
- Providing greater clarity in the provisions as to the control of wilding species.



Q Do you agree the issues raised need to be reviewed?
Are there any other issues?
Do you consider this approach to be suitable?
Are there other approaches that you consider to be preferable?

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4 Other Issues in the Rural Area which will be Reviewed.

- Ski Area sub-zones – are the zones appropriate for the continued operation and any potential expansion of the ski-fields and balanced with the landscape values of the district?
- The role and nature of Rural Visitor Zones and other Special Zones within the rural area – these are being reviewed separately.
- Potential fire risk from landscaping and revegetation in close proximity to housing.
- Potential noise and landscape impact of commercial recreation activities.
- Recognition of trails in accordance with agreed strategies.
- Surface of rivers and lakes – for example, clarity around mooring provisions is needed to reflect agreed strategies.



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These matters will be reviewed as part of the overall process. Are there any other rural issues that you think should be considered?

See the back page for a feedback form or email us at services@qldc.govt.nz with your thoughts.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1

Do you agree the issues raised in this document need to be reviewed?

3

Do you consider the approach outlined in this document to be suitable?

2

Are there any other issues that should be considered?

4

Are there other approaches that you consider to be preferable?

Please email feedback to services@qldc.govt.nz

Or send your comments to:
Policy & Planning, Queenstown Lakes District Council,
Private Bag 50072, Queenstown 9348

Feedback should be received by 29 February 2012 although feedback on these issues will be welcome at any time during the review process.

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