

Topic 18: Institutions

Introduction

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

It identifies four main issues with how the current District Plan manages institutions, 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 include an institutional zone to provide for institutions?

Institutional facilities such as the Timaru Hospital, Ara Institute of Technology and schools operate in quite a different manner to the activities which usually establish in the zones they are located in. For example, the Timaru Hospital is currently located in the Residential 2 Zone despite featuring large buildings (5 floors), large areas of carparking, high traffic movements and intermittent high levels of noise (from emergency vehicles). These sorts of activities would not normally be envisaged in a residential zone. Managing institutions in a different manner than they currently are, can allow them to operate more efficiently, for example avoiding the need to get resource consent for relatively minor building extensions. In providing for these activities by way of an institutional zone, it is important to ensure any adverse effects on activities located in close proximity to the institutional sites are avoided or mitigated.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) retain the current District Plan provisions of institutions being managed through the underlying zone; or (ii) include an institutional zone in the District Plan to provide for institutions.

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

We welcome your feedback on this topic.

Sally Parker
Timaru Ward Councillor





Issue 2

If the District Plan is to include an institutional zone, what land use activities should it cover?

The institutions initially identified as being suitable for an institutional zone include the Timaru Hospital, Ara Institute of Technology and schools. With regards to schools, two options exist – (a) to include all schools; and (b) only include the schools not designated by the Ministry of Education. The reason for not zoning the Ministry of Education sites is the fact these are designated in the District Plan. A designation is a form of spot zoning available to the Crown to allow educational activity to be undertaken without needing to comply with any provisions of the District Plan.

Other activities, such as Council's main building / site and fire stations are also potential candidates for inclusion (noting the requiring authorities / Ministers do have the power to designate these). It will also be necessary to consider what scale of activities are appropriate for inclusion in an institutional zone, for example, should all educational activities be included or should childcare centres (due to being generally of a smaller scale) be excluded?

It will also be necessary to consider what activities within an institutional zone will be permitted under the zoning, and what may require resource consent. It is recommended that the activities that are not necessary for the support of the particular activity being undertaken on-site should still require resource consent.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) amend the District Plan to include larger institutions, such as Timaru Hospital, Ara Institute of Technology and some schools in an institutional zone; (ii) amend the District Plan to include larger institutions, such as Timaru Hospital, Ara Institute of Technology and all schools in an institutional zone; or (iii) amend the District Plan to include all institutions, such as Timaru Hospital, Ara Institute of Technology, fire and police stations, and all schools in an institutional zone.

Issue 3

Should the District Plan use 'scheduling' as opposed to zoning to provide for institutions?

Scheduling of activities as a permitted activity is a different approach to provide for the continued existence of institutions. Scheduled activities are specific to a site and would be shown on the Planning Maps. For each site that is scheduled, the District Plan would need to include a description of the activity and permitted activity rules that apply to the activity. The District Plan would also need to include rules to enable consideration of resource consent applications for development that exceeds the permitted activity standards for the scheduled activity.

The key difference between a zoning and scheduling approach is that a zone has its own objectives and policies; a scheduled site would not. This means an activity requiring resource consent on a scheduled site may not find much support from the underlying zone objectives and policies, creating a potential 'roadblock' to expansion.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) retain the current District Plan provisions of institutions being managed through the underlying zone; (ii) include an institutional zone in the District Plan to provide for institutions; or (iii) use scheduling of institutions in the District Plan to provide for institutions.

Issue 4

If the District Plan is to include an institutional zone or scheduling of institutional sites, what performance standards should apply?

In creating an institutional zone or a list of scheduled institution sites, it will be necessary to determine what the suitable performance standards for these sites are, so they do not have adverse effects on the surrounding environment. Institutional activities can have adverse effects, such as high traffic generation, increased levels of noise, and shading from large structures. Performance standards regarding bulk and location, carparking and lighting are examples that will require consideration for inclusion.

Additionally, outline development plans could be utilised instead of creating an institutional zone or list of scheduled institutional sites. An outline development plan would need to be submitted by the relevant institution for a particular site (as part of the District Plan Review process) and would identify the likely envelope for development on a site. Any development 'outside' of what is identified in the outline development plan would require resource consent.

The options for addressing this issue are to (i) retain the current District Plan provisions of relying on performance standards for the underlying zones; (ii) amend the District Plan to include generic performance standards for all institutions; (iii) amend the District Plan to include specific performance standards based upon the type of institution; or (iv) amend the District Plan to include outline development plans as an alternative to performance standards.