

Section 32 Evaluation Report: Strategic Directions chapter

Strategic Context

Section 32(1)(a) of the Resource Management Act 1991 requires that a Section 32 evaluation report must examine the extent to which the proposed objectives are the most appropriate way to achieve the purpose of the Act.

The purpose of the Act demands an integrated planning approach and direction:

5 Purpose

(1) The purpose of this Act is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.

*(2) In this Act, **sustainable management** means managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety while—*

(a) sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and

(b) safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems; and

(c) avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.

The remaining provisions in Part 2 of the Act, particularly s.6, provide a framework upon which objectives to achieve the purpose of the Act and provisions (in this case, policies) to achieve the objectives can be built.

The purpose of the Strategic Directions chapter is to set an appropriate planning / resource management direction for the District. Without this chapter, there will be no strategic chapter that seeks to address the inter-relationships between the diversity of issues across the District.

Resource Management Issues

The resource management issues set out in this section have been identified from the following sources:

- Strategic Planning documents
- Primary and secondary research (refer to bibliography)
- Monitoring and review of Operative District Plan
- Community consultation

The Issues – which are a mix of economic, environmental and social factors - are given expression in the form of 7 goals (from proposed chapter):

- Goal 1: To develop a prosperous, resilient and equitable economy
- Goal 2: The strategic and integrated management of urban growth
- Goal 3: A quality built environment taking into account the character of individual communities
- Goal 4: The protection of our natural environment and ecosystems

- Goal 5: Our distinctive landscapes are protected from inappropriate development
- Goal 6: To enable a safe and healthy community that is strong, diverse and inclusive for all people
- Goal 7: Council will recognise the significance of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and the importance of its relationship with Ngai Tahu

Scale and Significance Evaluation

The level of detailed analysis undertaken for the evaluation of the proposed objectives and provisions has been determined by an assessment of the scale and significance of the implementation of the proposed provisions in the Strategic Directions chapter. In making this assessment, regard has been had to the following, namely whether the objectives and provisions:

- Result in a significant change to the character and amenity of local communities;
- Have effects on resources that are considered to be a matter of national importance in terms of section 6 of the Act
- Adversely affect those with particular interests including Maori
- Involve effects that have been considered implicitly or explicitly by higher order documents;
- Involve regulations or other interventions that will impose significant costs on individuals or communities

Evaluation of proposed Objectives

Section 32(1) of the RMA requires the Council to evaluate the extent to which the objectives are the most appropriate way to achieve the purpose (s5) of the Act.

The Otago Regional Policy Statement (RPS) sets a broad policy direction for achieving the purpose of the Act. The Strategic Directions takes this broad approach along with the framework provided by Part 2 of the Act and develops 7 high level goals to achieve the purpose of the Act in the Queenstown Lakes District. In the context of each of these goals a number of objectives and policies are specified which set a clear direction for the District to achieve the purpose of the Act balancing environmental, social, economic and cultural matters.

It is considered that the objectives in the draft Strategic Directions chapter are the most appropriate way to achieve the purpose of the Act within the framework provided by Part 2 of the Act, the RPS and the high level goals. This is based on the experience of the Council in managing the natural and physical resources of the District under the Act for the past 22 years and the further research relied on (listed in the attached bibliography). Without these objectives, the Proposed District Plan would lack a clear direction and an integrated statement as to the planning and resource management aspirations for the District.

Retention of the status quo approach was considered. The status quo is represented by the 'Sustainable Management' chapter of the Operative District Plan. This chapter is dominated by unfocussed preamble, and does not set a strong policy framework. It is very seldom referred to by District Plan administrators / decision makers. It does

not help support the sustainable management of the District and retention of this approach is not supported.

Evaluation of the appropriateness of the proposed provisions to achieve the objectives

Section 32(1)(b) requires an evaluation of whether the provisions are the most appropriate way to achieve the objectives. The proposed policies are the mechanism by which the Strategic Directions chapter seeks to achieve the objectives. In examining whether these provisions are the most appropriate way to achieve the objectives, section 32(1)(b) requires this report to:

- (i) Identify other reasonably practicable options for achieving the objectives; and
- (ii) Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the provisions in achieving the objectives; and
- (iii) Summarise the reasons for deciding on the provisions.

With regard to these matters the following is noted:

- Policies are the logical means of achieving objectives;
- In a Strategic Directions chapter there is no need for the use of rules or other provisions
- An option of not stating any policies would fail to ensure a robust strategic direction is set, and the planning framework would risk being too 'high level' and generic
- A key weakness of the Operative District Plan is the absence of a chapter with a clear hierarchy of goals, objectives and policies that strongly, directly, and unambiguously set a planning direction for the district
- The policies "flesh out" the objectives with regards to the key resource management issues in the District, and therefore effectively and efficiently set a strong planning framework for the balance of the District Plan
- These matters constitute the key reasons for deciding on the provisions

The development of the policies has relied on the experience of managing the District's natural and physical resources and the research listed in the bibliography. The consideration of alternative policies has occurred within that context along with consultation, leading to those set out in the chapter.

It is noted that ultimately the provisions in this chapter will mean little without robust objectives, policies and rules at the next level down in the District Plan policy hierarchy. By necessity, this may require the Strategic Directions chapter to be revisited as other chapters are progressed.

Further assessment with particular regard to the requirements of Section 32(b)(ii) follows.

Benefits and Costs of implementing the proposed provisions

Section 32(2) requires the assessment of the proposed provisions to identify and assess benefits and costs anticipated from the implementation of the provisions. In addition to environmental, social and cultural benefits and costs, economic costs and

benefits must be considered. In terms of economic costs and benefits, the assessment must consider whether the provisions are anticipated to provide or reduce economic growth, and whether they are anticipated to provide or reduce employment.

With regard to these matters the following is noted:

- The proposed policies address environmental, economic, social and cultural matters
- The policies give significant priority to economic growth and development, including employment growth
- Economic growth is largely promoted through policies that promote development and growth in key centres, and the promotion of growth in tourism
- However the policies also promote diversification of the district's economy to create a more resilient and sustainable economy
- The policies make it clear however that economic growth should not be at the expense of undermining the key environmental qualities of the District.

More specifically, benefits and costs are outlined as follows:

Benefits

- Promotion of economic development, based around tourism, but promoting and enabling a diversification of economic activity. Subsequent issue-specific policy will help realise these policies
- Promotion of the enhancement and strengthening of the "key commercial hubs" in the District: Queenstown and Wanaka, to enhance their economic, social and cultural contributions
- Discouragement of commercial rezoning that may adversely impact on the role and function of these key hubs
- Promotion of an urban form based around intensification of development that provides a more efficient approach to the provision of infrastructure, and supports public transport
- A compact urban form will minimise the occurrence of housing development in rural areas, therefore lessening impacts on the district's recognised environmental and landscape qualities
- Promotion of greater housing density and diversity to enable a better housing supply response to help address housing affordability issues
- Strong policy statements around key environmental goals, including air and water quality, protection of significant indigenous vegetation
- Strong statements around protection of landscape values
- More broadly, the provisions will set a very strong strategic planning direction for the District which will assist administrators and decisions makers of the District Plan in dealing effectively and efficiently with regard to the District's key resource management issues.
- Related to this, the provisions will help to provide greater certainty to the community, including the development industry.

Costs

- Policies that discourage commercial rezoning will potentially negatively affect the ability of the owners of land to provide for their wellbeing, and could also have the indirect effect of reducing economic competition.
- Whilst the promotion of a compact urban form has a number of benefits, limits on residential rezoning of rural land may have some negative housing affordability consequences. However these costs are considered minor given the large supply of greenfield residential land in the District, and the proposed intensification of urban form and provision of additional urban housing.

It is not considered practicable to quantify these benefits and costs, given the high level strategic nature of the provisions. Quantification is likely to be possible and necessary in other District Plan chapters where rule provisions are provided.

Bibliography

A number of technical reports and assessments have informed the development of the policies and indeed the whole chapter. These reports and assessments are linked below:

- A number of District Plan Monitoring reports
<http://www.qldc.govt.nz/monitoring>
- 'Review of District Plan Business Zones Capacity and Development of Zoning Hierarchy' prepared by McDermott Miller Strategies Limited, 15 November 2013
http://www.qldc.govt.nz/images/Files/District_Plan_Review_Brochures/Business_Zones_Capacity_15_Nov_2013.pdf
- A peer review of the McDermott Miller Strategies Limited report by Dr Phil McDermott
http://www.qldc.govt.nz/images/Files/District_Plan_Review_Brochures/Business_Zones_Planning_Peer_review_January_2014.pdf
- Various Council strategies prepared since 2005, including the Growth Management Strategy
http://www.qldc.govt.nz/strategies_and_publications
- Wanaka Structure Plan
http://www.qldc.govt.nz/strategic_growth_management

In addition community consultation and several workshops with Elected Members, together with a workshop with the 'Resource Management Focus Group'¹ have informed the development of the policy. Development of the policy has also aligned with preliminary development of the Proposed Regional Policy Statement for Otago.

¹ A group of community leaders and resource management-related professionals set up as a District Plan review "sounding board"