

Form 7

Notice of appeal to Environment Court against decision on proposed policy statement or plan or change or variation

Clause 14(1) of Schedule 1, Resource Management Act 1991

To the Registrar
Environment Court
Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch

1. I, Michael Mather Ovens, appeal against a decision (or part of a decision) of Dunedin City Council on the following policy plan : The Second Generation Plan.
2. I made a submission on that policy plan.
3. I am not a trade competitor for the purposes of [section 308D](#) of the Resource Management Act 1991.
4. I am directly affected by an effect of the subject of the appeal that
 - (a) adversely affects the environment; and
 - (b) does not relate to trade competition or the effects of trade competition.
5. I received notice of the decision on 7 November 2018.
6. The decision was made by Dunedin City Council.
7. The decision (or part of the decision) that I am appealing is: The highly restrictive nature of the proposed RR2 zone and associated rules on the land at 28 Patmos Ave Dunedin.
8. The reasons for the appeal are as follows:

The proposed zoning and associated rules are inappropriate for the nature of the land and too restrictive for the land resource.
9. I seek the following relief:

As per my submission relating to the property, we seek a more fitting zone allocation i.e.LLR1 or similar and the ability to subdivide, remove the NC status of any subdivision activity and increase the indigenous vegetation clearance limits, etc, etc.
10. I attach the following documents to this notice:
 - (a) a copy of my submission or further submission
 - (b) a copy of the relevant decision (or part of the decision):
 - (c) any other documents necessary for an adequate understanding of the appeal:
 - (d) a list of names and addresses of persons to be served with a copy of this notice.
11. These documents constitute part of this form and, as such, must be attached to both copies of the notice lodged with the Environment Court. The appellant does not need to attach a copy of a regional or district plan or policy statement. In addition, the appellant does not need to attach copies of the submission and decision to the copies of the notice served on other persons if the copy served lists these documents and states that copies may be obtained, on request, from the appellant.

Michael Ovens
Signature of appellant

(or person authorised to sign
on behalf of appellant)

17-12-2018

Date

Address for service of appellant:

Telephone: 027-467-9769

Fax/email: theovens@xtra.co.nz

Contact person: Michael Ovens – part owner

Note to appellant

You may appeal only if—

- you referred in your submission or further submission to the provision or matter that is the subject of your appeal; and
- in the case of a decision relating to a proposed policy statement or plan (as opposed to a variation or change), your appeal does not seek withdrawal of the proposed policy statement or plan as a whole.

Your right to appeal may be limited by the trade competition provisions in [Part 11A](#) of the Resource Management Act 1991.

The Environment Court, when hearing an appeal relating to a matter included in a document under [section 55\(2B\)](#), may consider only the question of law raised.

You must lodge the original and 1 copy of this notice with the Environment Court within 30 working days of being served with notice of the decision to be appealed. The notice must be signed by you or on your behalf. You must pay the filing fee required by [regulation 35](#) of the Resource Management (Forms, Fees, and Procedure) Regulations 2003.

You must serve a copy of this notice on the local authority that made the decision and on the Minister of Conservation (if the appeal is on a regional coastal plan), within 30 working days of being served with a notice of the decision.

You must also serve a copy of this notice on every person who made a submission to which the appeal relates within 5 working days after the notice is lodged with the Environment Court.

Within 10 working days after lodging this notice, you must give written notice to the Registrar of the Environment Court of the name, address, and date of service for each person served with this notice.

However, you may apply to the Environment Court under [section 281](#) of the Resource Management Act 1991 for a waiver of the above timing or service requirements (see [form 38](#)).

Other submitters:-

- | | | |
|----------------------|-------|--|
| 1 Stephen Johnston | #1030 | stephen@oadunedin.nz |
| 2 Paul Nelson | #2028 | madnel@vodafone.co.nz |
| 3 John Satterthwaite | #2319 | jjsatt48@clear.net.nz |

EVIDENCE – URBAN LAND SUPPLY

Ref no. H170-2017-05-23 PART 2

Submitter 740.5, 740.6, 740.22, AND 740.23

Michael Ovens Architect

1. BACKGROUND

1.01

I'm a part owner of 28 Patmos Ave which has been in the family for 3 generations. My grandparents bought it off Bishop Neville, Dunedin's first Anglican Bishop and of St. Paul's Cathedral fame and, as the land adjoined his Pine Hill farm. Later the State compulsorily purchased most of the farm for State Housing and Northern Motorway purposes, separating the land from the rest of the farm. My mother purchased this piece of land from her family when linemen were allowed to cut down mature Rimu.

1.02

Previous planning consultation in the 1970's was basically limited to two council employees approaching my parents in the street and suggesting to re-zone the property from residential to rural as the rates would be less; understandably they felt manipulated. In 1990 the property was transferred to us. During 1995 general plan change consultation, we tried to get rural subdivision down from the 15ha requirement. Any reduction in size was thwarted by a Taieri lobby group (consisting of about 7 people) insisting on preserving high class soils. At recent re-zone requests, we suggested an R6 application in lieu of rural, but the planners' suggestion of R.R. was probably a better fit due to the site's topography, orientation and landscape attributes. We didn't object as we couldn't and negativity of RR-2 didn't exist at that time.

1.03

Not sure why our hearing is in this ULS process. This slightly misrepresents our submission as we have requested the ability to subdivide which, in the planners' eyes, means/implies 'urban expansion'; this is a bit unnecessary. Our emphasis is on management, not future expansion.

1.04

Located just over 2.0km from the city's main street, the property has potential for people to live in a country setting in close proximity to town – this is what makes Dunedin so great! 'A city in the country' is an apt description on visual grounds but in physical reality I do struggle with the 'compact city' ideal when the greater city encompasses such a large geographic area.

1.05

At 152,096m², the land is oversized for function, the majority of which is covered in native bush. It adjoins both residential and rural zones and is primarily situated on the low slopes of a valley, off a valley so not very prominent. It's not visible from the main city area.

1.06

Given the context and the natural attributes of the land, the planners seem to acknowledge – and we agree – that the site is not rural as such and is more residential in character. Being a commercially sized piece of land, therefore doesn't make sense. Allotments becoming less commercial in size would encourage the property to be more nurtured.

Please refer to photos and maps.

2. SUBMISSION POINTS

2.01

Our original submission placed emphasis on two main areas of concern:

1. Vegetation clearance controls (740.5, 740.22, and 740.23);
2. Lack of subdivision potential in RR-2 zone (740.6).

2.02

Disappointed with the decisions made and the recommendations of the 42a report. Our 15 ha of native bush clad site is essentially void of any development potential – freezing our land like this is not a maintaining and/or enhancing method to manage as required under RMA – it's neglect!

We can't clear to make a farm, can't clear to build on; this results in a 'private reserve' for the benefit of the general public whom cannot even access. RR-2 zoning is not a good fit!

2.03

Frustratingly, ourselves and the planners are probably all on the same page as the plan's strategic direction – it's the approach and methodology the planners are taking which we feel goes against the grain and won't achieve the outcome we are all after.

2.04

As mentioned in 1.03 above, planners seem more concerned with identifying future urban land. 28 Patmos is already urban but the lack of being fully serviced (or the potential to be so) is a problem to them.

Ever since the current plan consultation, I noted my concerns of too much emphasis wrongly placed on the 3 water infrastructure capacities; I cannot accept that the sewage system attributes are shaping our town.

2.05

I've worked out, in theory, that to clear our land of bush, but still leave green space, will take over 1800 years to complete – totally onerous.

2.06

Central Government appear to agree with us. They feel councils are not freeing up enough land for housing. I assume that is why NPS has issued a policy statement telling councils to get on with their housing-related duties.

Relating to this document, I see the planner insists that RR-2 land is not covered by NPS – I would argue that our site is part of the urban environment and land containing/adjacent to concentrated settlements of 10,000+.

2.07

The planners insist that residential/living activity in RR-2 is secondary – only associated with farming and deters residential only, even on rural sized lots, like ours – I get the feeling this is trying to be some “knock-out” type clause; it's a notion not worthy of respect. It would be totally disrespectful to demand people can only live in urban areas if they are making an income first!

2.08

Due to vegetation clearance requirements, our site can never be a farm on this very issue alone. It's already surrounded by predominately residential activity and so can already be considered urban.

2.09

Not only does the bush reinforce the status of 'urban' on our land, but so do the physical constraints. We feel this is not contrary to the strategic direction of the area as 'country home' sized lots may still, and in most situations, improve on the issue of maintaining and enhancing the country amenity. Owners without overburdened sized lots potentially can do a better job.

2.10

We feel the closest urban zone type to our property situation (i.e. living in urban scenery) would be LLRES 1 or 2 (maybe with increased minimum site sizes). More lots will not necessarily fragment the scenery as allotment borders don't necessarily reflect all the fence lines or lines on the ground, gullies, bush edges etc.

2.11

It all boils down to the fact that objective 15.2.1 (LLRES) is a more appropriate fit and a better application fit to our land compared to objective 17.2.1 (RR) as the report/planners insist. They have got it wrong.

2.12

I note that no minimum site size is given for RR-2 sites. For management and assessment matters surely a minimum requirement is needed. The planners have used the 1 ha measurement to - I suppose - encapsulate/capture the desired properties. It

puts an over 15 ha site into a major disadvantage really and we feel it is a big discrepancy.

2.13

Another "knock-out" type clause that completely disregards acceptable/legitimate mitigating design solutions for country subdivisions is clause 17.2.1.6 which avoids cross-lease, unit title type developments. These 'group' building or cluster buildings within confined areas are historically proven solutions, even in more sensitive locations (e.g. Waikouaiti Coastal Devt. and Sabina Apartments).

2.14

Further confusing logic for our RR-2 zoned property is the selection of 'visitor accommodation' as an allowable activity. This would seem to indicate creating large commercial building (s) in such a perceived sensitive area is somewhat acceptable.

3. RELATED MATTERS

3.01

The family and I disagree with a lot of the 42a analysis due to being a majority of what we consider to be inconsequential evidence for our situation because:

1. Not a 'landscape important area', therefore landscape evidence not totally required;
2. Transportation evidence not applicable as the roading network for the area is already in place!
3. 3 water evidence not applicable either as we haven't asked to be connected (more concerning to me is the fact the panel has to make major decisions with such unreliable data!)
4. R E agents generally deal with 'already built' physical resources, not necessarily the building potential of the resource.

Importantly, the various expert witness evidence naturally gravitate positively to each of their specialities, which is only normal I suppose, but for a more rigorous analysis - and I would have thought it important in constructing an urban plan - with the assistance of an urban planner, i.e. an advocate for the possible built environment.

3.02

The plan's objective 2.6.1 is to provide a range of housing choices that provides for the community needs and supports social well-being, but from my analysis of the various residential zones, it appears the only choice variation that can be made is the distance between 5 habitable room maximum households, regardless of site size! i.e. not much real choice. I know there is some flexibility in ICR but it may be worthwhile suggesting a zone with even greater distance between buildings, which could be possible on sites

like ours and also, from what I can see, it looks feasible to increase a LLRES zone size and location choice.

3.03

Land suitability and desirability assessment issues generally conclude that the 'likes' of our property are unsuitable for development (not sure if desirability issues are covered under RMA?) due to physical land constraints and high visual amenity. Experience has proven that development on least desirable land saves the more desirable land for people, e.g. Treble Cone Ski Field building – all flat land needed for carparks, all gentle sloping land required to ski on, meaning the best place to locate a base building was on the craggy worse sections of land in between.

3.04

Further on this topic, development in less desirable locations can mean less pressure development on more desirable/prime locations. I can't believe that scheduled under GR1TZ overlay zone, priority 1 are two prominent city golf courses!

3.05

Re-zoning assessment sheet criticism:

1. One dwelling per site of at least 1 ha is a pretty severe entrapment measure for an over 15.2 ha site, especially considering surrounding areas range from 900m² to 6.86 ha and average at 3.083 ha;
2. No mention in historic use of previous residential zoning, Stately Home, Gun Club, Bible College and Farm. Stating rural/native bush only is misleading the panel;
3. First time we have seen/heard that there were submitters in opposition;
4. Closeness to urban areas only mentions Leith Valley which leaves out Pine Hill, Garden Village, Fulton Road, Tanner Road and Three Hills subdivisions;
5. On effects on protected landscape, no mention of other natural features, or significant feature, or protected tree(s), or native reserve, or urban conservation areas are listed. So why such a negative assessment made further on under the 'important green and other open spaces' heading? This is confusing and inconsistent.
6. Transportation comments on the 'perceived' problems listed are unfounded. Compare the town-belt between Prospect Park and Drivers Road; this is narrower contains blind corners and copes with a much higher traffic flow;
7. 3 water comments are generally good for us but to imply re-zoning equals further connections doesn't seem right;
8. Requesting owners to provide 'structure plans' and 'land owner funding' for services, is a job for council;
9. Reverse sensitivity concerns of the motorway already exist with potentially greater concentration with the adjacent general residential area;
10. Any 'biodiversity' or 'recreation' issues can be managed with the large lots proposed. There is room for flexibility as we have 15.2 ha + remember and two waterways;

11. Site suitability: Dunedin would be a different city if suitability requirements were enforced to the maximum; half the suburbs wouldn't exist and city would not be as compact. Individuals have their own suitability criteria and live accordingly to their priorities. The whole slope/aspect thing can be sorted through good design of buildings, i.e. 1x room deep houses;
12. Slope calculations focus on the worst case scenarios. 28 Patmos Ave has 9,768m² of 'bad' slope, but there is no mention of the other 142,328m² 'good' slope;
13. "Important green and other open spaces, rural character and visual amenity": all this means is that it's probably impossible to build anything anywhere;
14. I note that no one has objected during the submission period from Pine Hill saying the potential loss of 'green space' will be devastating for them. Bush clearance does not automatically mean loss of green space anyway;
15. Building/structures in green amenity happen all the time; it doesn't necessarily mean a loss of the visual amenity. Bush is green space with a third dimension, it has depth and cover, which automatically can mitigate any potential negative effects caused by a building (see photo);
16. Policy assessment comments are negatively bias as we feel our site positively complies with all the policy requirements 2.6.3.1a and 2.6.3.1b, and 2.2.4.1a to 2.2.4.1i;
17. Alternatively zoning in direction of request is wrong to be labelled 'N/A'. We feel many of the low density zones could fit our situation; LLRES 1 would be continuous with our neighbour for instance.

3.06

Overall, the assessment sheet cannot be fully relied on with confidence.

3.07

Similar conclusions can be made with the "Scoring Matrix." Planners have scored our site "40" when "49" is probably more accurate as bush is not considered open space.

4. CONCLUSION

4.01

We can all conclude that our site is an example of "living in the landscape" rather than "working in the landscape" which has an urban bias. So what type of urban zone is most applicable, or more specifically, at what density level is most applicable to address the two main issues, one being to protect and enhance the visual amenity and the relates to possible servicing constraints.

4.02

The average sized lot in our street is just over 3 ha. The planners suggested RR of 2 ha during re-zoning requests so something around these levels of density, no matter what the zone is called could suffice.

4.03

Allowing general subdivision of our site to smaller, more manageable sizes, but still allowing on-site services and amenity maintenance, is a win-win situation. Allowing general subdivision from a NC status to RD status could assist the process.

4.04

Lack of infrastructure capacity may be incorrectly applied as our property was previously zoned residential so you could assume capacity was sufficient from the outset.

4.05

Native vegetation clearance requirements will be modified as per the 42a report. We think there will still be issues on this with regards to monitoring, policing and measuring such a requirement, i.e. is measurement taken from top canopy or base of trunk etc.

4.06

Domestication v's commercialisation? The smaller scale is the better fit. This enables better/easier management potential for maintaining and enhancing the natural amenity. i.e. smaller gear and equipment, less sheds and storage, more pride-of-ownership and appearance. Less reliance on council work (see entry photos).

4.07

The creation of a 'leafy' subdivision with the low density were suggesting gives community choice, greater flexibility and so more resilience. All desirable city attributes.

4.08

LLRES sites appear limited in supply and in distribution. Adding our site(s) to this mix would help rectify this situation and add capacity to the city's vibrancy and range of living choice without harm.

4.09

Efficiencies are gained when development on less suitable land is made over development on more suitable land, i.e. build on the worst land means people can be on the good land.

It's good practice to use the more wasteful land resource properly, especially if the maintenance and protection of native bush on non-productive land can result.

4.10

Subdivision on our site would have no encroachment effects on the residential activities or the rural activities. No loss of productive rural land, character amenity.

4.11

This would enhance the infrastructure that is already in place, i.e. greater cost sharing for buses and rubbish etc.

4.12

Can't be labelled 'fragmentation' of the country side when country side is already fragmented. Any subdivision boundary lines are just legal borders on a piece of paper.

4.13

'Urban expansion' is another label not applicable, making policy 2.2.4.3 redundant? This urban land already exists. It just happens to be "country" in character. People and living are part of nature.

4.14

'New Urban Agenda' asserts that planning authorities need a more flexible approach, rather than tight legislation of which 2GP appears to resemble. It should not have reliance on individual resource consent proposals as these can be more dispersive. The plan renewal process allows greater management integration and is a prime function of any council.

4.15

It is appropriate to reconsider 28 Patmos either by re-zoning to LLRES 1 or 2 or allow subdivision in RR-2 and modify vegetation clearance conditions as this would allow owners to properly nurture and develop the property in accordance with the plan's wider circumstances without compromising council's infrastructural resource or the adjacent amenity.

Michael Ovens B. Arch
NZCD (Arch)
FNZIA
Registered Architect



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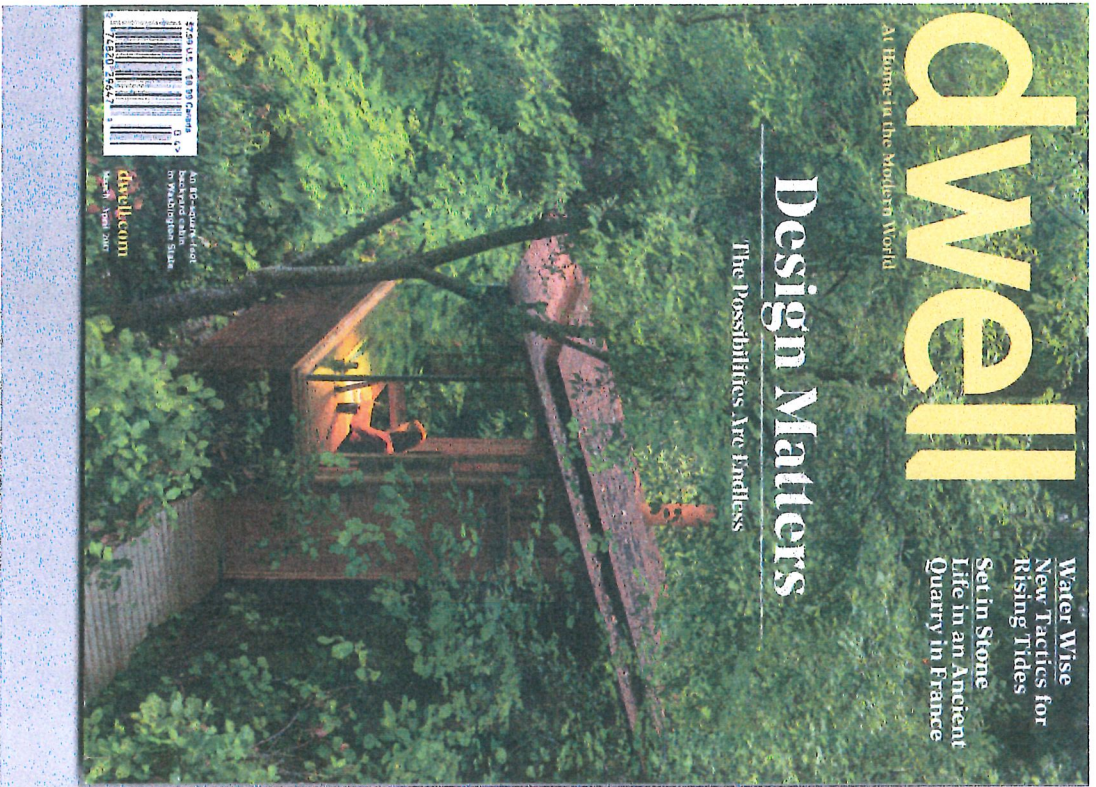
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The great New Zealand infrastructure and fees scam

Building Today columnist and industry stalwart Mike Fox says, amongst other cruel and unjust scenarios, infrastructure ownership is a racket that has flown under the radar for far too long.

Before embarking on a building project, the average Kiwi has little to no idea about just how much the cost of council-imposed infrastructure, council butt covering and regulatory fees increase the cost and time it takes to get a new home.

What they then discover is nothing short of a national disgrace, as they come up against a wall of bureaucracy with costly and often mindless road blocks at seemingly every turn.

They are further enraged when they find they are getting charged by the minute by the very same entities as they try to navigate through this maze of ever-shifting goal posts.

The home owner naturally begins to think that surely this can't be happening in New Zealand. Why is this so difficult? Am I being singled out for unfair treatment? Is there any thought or care as to what the economic or social impact may be to the applicant?

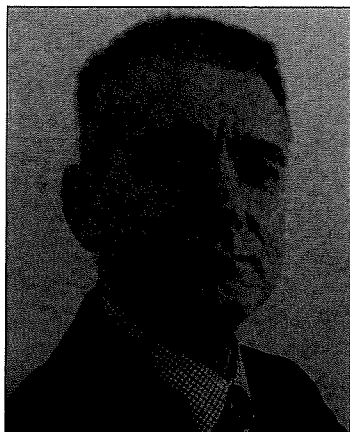
Those that operate within the construction and development industry are acutely aware of the dysfunctional way the Resource Management Act (RMA), the Local Government Act and the Building Act are skewed not to provide service, but to exonerate local authorities from risk and to generate revenue at local levels.

Home owners and contractors are powerlessly trapped within an outdated monopolistic system that needs a complete overhaul. The drivers within the current system are set to inadvertently create an outcome that's so risk averse and subjective that it is hobbling productivity and driving up costs for the end user.

It's no surprise then that the cost of providing housing is needlessly soaring. In the past 15 years the cost of delivering a standardised new house has risen 110%, compared with the overall cost of living rising only 44% in that same period.

Much of this extra cost is to do with the compounding effects of layers of regulation, council fees and unfairly imposed infrastructure costs.

The torturous land-to-market journey starts with the RMA which, while originally well intentioned, has proven to be completely devoid of any cognisance of what financial implications or costs might be incurred with a project, or any understanding as to what the nation requires to house its population.



Mike Fox

Next, local authorities, along with often ideologically-driven planners, interpret the RMA alongside their own local guidelines and unique district plans, complete with an individual planner's subjective views which can put unrealistic conditions and significant infrastructure costs on raw land or a building project, ultimately driving costs up.

Costs incurred by new home owners and developers include things such as stormwater detention tanks, replacement or upgrades of council drains, unnecessary replacement of existing drains on private property, new water mains, fire hydrants, photovoltaic power systems, impositions on design, and above-code insulation — if you can imagine it you might be charged for it.

Many of these extra costs are a result of ongoing insufficient infrastructure funding, maintenance, forward planning by the local authority or a particular penchant of the council officers.

For them, the easiest way to get funding is by imposing the cost on the next home builder. Local authorities must remember that they are there to provide the basic services that a city's inhabitants require — not only the immediate requirements but those for future growth as well.

Councils appear to have lost focus on what their main purpose is, and often much-needed infrastructure takes a back seat while funding gets side-tracked on social projects and feel-good follies.

It is often more politically advantageous for local authorities to lump costs onto the silent minority who are building rather than risk the ire of the voting public by alternatively spreading costs across all ratepayers, or over many years.

Populist planning choices

Local politicians who wish to be re-elected are, unfortunately, set up to make populist planning choices rather than choosing what is best for a city in the long term.

The fear of NIMBY and voter backlash too often gets in the way of the greater good. These planning functions should be removed from local politicians' mandates and put in the hands of experienced commissioners.

Only then would we start to get well thought out, pragmatic and apolitical planning decisions. Councils could then plan for the future infrastructure the city or region needs on a longer-term basis, and fund accordingly.

Local body politicians can also get tripped up badly by the council officers who often deliver services that contradict what the councillors want to happen.

A case in point — you only need to look at

Wellington Mayor Justin Lester's recent comments about how he wanted to make rules to stop land banking and increase available building land around Wellington. Worthy comments by the Mayor, but the developers rightly pointed out

the inefficiencies and road blocks council officers place before those wanting to develop the green field and infill sections he feels are being land banked.

Local authorities are also guilty of over use of the RMA provisions, often demanding resource

Planners and urban designers need to stop operating as pseudo clients and start working in the real commercial world. They must realise that textbook utopia is beyond the financial resources of most.

consents for the most minor of issues that, realistically, have no impact on anyone, aside from delaying a project and emptying the wallet of the applicant.

Unbelievably, on larger projects it can take three to 10 years to get approval through the RMA and council, and can cost developers many hundreds of thousands of dollars in the process, with very little certainty of the final outcome.

All this time and money turns into extra cost that gets added to the price of providing buildable land.

Many of the world's most successful and prosperous cities have a very light regulatory touch on the supply of residential land and, not surprisingly, they bring affordable land to the market very quickly.

If we are serious about solving land supply, we need to stop being so precious, pick the best out of overseas practice and make some urgent pragmatic changes.

Hidden amongst all of this lurk monopolistic utility providers that are free of any overriding regulation or competition. They charge what they feel like for supply of services, often many more times than the actual cost.

Indeed, it is cruel and unjust that the initial developer/home owner pays an over-inflated price to set up the infrastructure, yet the ownership of it remains with the utility provider who then commands a rental fee to allow the same developer/home owner to use the infrastructure they paid for themselves. Go figure!

This racket has flown under the radar for far too long, and needs addressing as soon as possible.

Central Government also needs to step up and accept that many local authorities just don't have the immediate financial resources or skills to provide the infrastructure for rapidly increasing city limits and population growth.

Turning a blind eye or expecting a new home owner to foot the total fees, GST and infrastructure bill upfront on a section purchase or building project is neither a sustainable nor affordable model, as is being witnessed now.

Central Government could help local authorities by providing low interest loans, and by looking at rule changes to spread the recovery of the infrastructure costs and fees over many decades, which would help keep the cost of land down and present a far more equitable solution.

Central Government also needs to provide strong leadership and bring uniformity to our mish mash of local planning regulations.

Everyone knows the current system is no longer capable of delivering what is required, and expecting the market to sort it out or hoping that 70-odd disjointed local authorities will collectively come up with a solution is a pipe dream.

Time will only tell if the long-awaited reforms to the RMA that have just been passed will make an appreciable difference. I suspect it will be too little too late, and that it will be back to the drawing board again before we see any meaningful difference made.

What can be done?

So what can be done in the short term while the bigger picture is grappled with?

- The worst offending councils need to take a realistic view of the actual risks they have when issuing and administering building consents, rather than the imagined risks, and call the dogs off.

Home owners' money and productivity are being squandered in the inane pursuit of eliminating all possible liability.

- Standardise and cut back the number of instances in which resource consents are required across the country. The current level has reached

tipping point, is out of touch with reality and can only be viewed cynically as soft touch revenue collecting.

- Limit the authority of planners and urban designers. They need to stop operating as pseudo clients and start working in the real commercial world. They must realise that textbook utopia is beyond the financial resources of most.

- Legislate to have financial oversight of monopolistic utility providers. Their practices need to be curbed, and competition introduced.

- Infrastructure costs should be funded on rolling averages over many decades, not be fully imposed on the first person who purchases or builds.

- The fees local authorities charge for infrastructure and reserves should be limited and regularly audited to ensure they are fair and used for their intended purpose.

- And, finally, start engaging with industry to come up with a workable system that brings affordable, sustainable efficiency back into the mix with the correct amount of checks and balances.

Ultimately, the systems currently in place are not working in an efficient, affordable or sustainable way, and need a pragmatic overhaul.

I trust my words and suggestions are taken in the manner they are intended — as constructive criticism — and as a starting point for discussion that might, indeed, be a catalyst for positive change.

- This article contains the author's opinion only, and is not necessarily the opinion of the Registered Master Builders Association, its chief executive or staff.

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What can be done?

So what can be done in the short term while the bigger picture is grappled with?

- The worst offending councils need to take a realistic view of the actual risks they have when issuing and administering building consents, rather than the imagined risks, and call the dogs off.

Home owners' money and productivity are being squandered in the inane pursuit of eliminating all possible liability.

- Standardise and cut back the number of instances in which resource consents are required across the country. The current level has reached

tipping point, is out of touch with reality and can only be viewed cynically as soft touch revenue collecting.

- Limit the authority of planners and urban designers. They need to stop operating as pseudo clients and start working in the real commercial world. They must realise that textbook utopia is beyond the financial resources of most.

- Legislate to have financial oversight of monopolistic utility providers. Their practices need to be curbed, and competition introduced.

- Infrastructure costs should be funded on rolling averages over many decades, not be fully imposed on the first person who purchases or builds.

- The fees local authorities charge for infrastructure and reserves should be limited and regularly audited to ensure they are fair and used for their intended purpose.

- And, finally, start engaging with industry to come up with a workable system that brings affordable, sustainable efficiency back into the mix with the correct amount of checks and balances.

Ultimately, the systems currently in place are not working in an efficient, affordable or sustainable way, and need a pragmatic overhaul.

I trust my words and suggestions are taken in the manner they are intended — as constructive criticism — and as a starting point for discussion that might, indeed, be a catalyst for positive change.

• This article contains the author's opinion only, and is not necessarily the opinion of the Registered Master Builders Association, its chief executive or staff.

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