

4 Sustainability

Introduction

The purpose of the Resource Management Act 1991 is set out in section 5 of the Act. This states:

- (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 reasonable 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 assumption behind the Act is that people know what their needs are and how to meet them. It is the adverse effects of activities on the environment which the Council is required to manage through the District Plan.

In meeting their needs, people will use and affect natural and physical resources. The Act requires that such interaction occurs in a sustainable manner. People using those natural and physical resources have to meet the tests of sections 5(2)(a), (b) and (c) of the Act. These are non-negotiable bottom lines.

To the Manawhenua, Maori generally and many others, the environment is an inter-related whole. Changes cannot occur in one part of the environment without the potential for change in other parts. This ‘holistic’ approach to environmental management recognises the ecological inter-relationships between and within ecosystems and is consistent with the intent of section 5 of the Act. The Council recognises the need for such an approach, both in terms of the requirements of the Act and manner in which many people perceive the environment.

Dunedin today is the outcome of more than 150 years of development. While Dunedin is dynamic, the basic form and character of the City is already established. That results in a strong desire to maintain and enhance the existing natural and physical resources of the City, while at the same time not constraining growth.

In meeting the purpose of the Act, to provide for the sustainable management of natural and physical resources, the Council is mindful that since the 1920s Dunedin has had a relatively static and ageing population structure, and relative to other urban parts of New Zealand, a declining economic base. As a consequence, particular care is required in managing the natural and physical resources of the City. In areas where growth is the norm, any mistakes in the management of resources can in some circumstances be 'corrected' by further development. Dunedin cannot do that, and any mistakes made must be 'lived with' for many years to come.

With this background, Dunedin faces particular problems in terms of the efficient and economic provisions of infrastructure services. The level of services however is appropriate for the needs of the City, allowing for modest increase in some areas. Expansion beyond existing serviced areas is not provided for because of the cumulative effects that occur as a consequence of such expansion, or to other parts of the network. As a consequence, any future growth in the size of the City (by area or population), or any development that places considerable demand on infrastructural services, will necessitate reconsideration of the approach adopted in the District Plan. Such proposals can be considered using the plan change or plan review procedures.

Council adopts other strategies via its Strategic Plan for the provision of services and also other plans to encourage growth and development. The District Plan for resource management reasons adopts the same approach as the Council's Strategic Plan, and the Strategic Plan contains similar objectives to the District Plan. The two documents are therefore linked, and changes to one may necessitate changes to the other. The links between the two plans also enable the integration of the natural and physical resources of the City.

4.1 Significant Resource Management Issues

Issue 4.1.1

The residents of Dunedin seek to retain and enhance the existing character and amenity of the City and surrounding areas.

Objective: 4.2.1

Policy: 4.3.1

Explanation

The City was settled more than 150 years ago, and since that time it has developed a particular character and amenity in both its urban and rural form which is highly prized by its residents and visitors. This character includes heritage buildings, distinctive landscape and townscape and readily accessible recreational and natural areas. In that respect the City is fortunate as it has developed an identity, and it seeks to build on that in the future.

Issue 4.1.2

The level of infrastructural service that is appropriate to an area reflects the density and intensity of development anticipated in that area in the future.

Objectives: 4.2.2, 4.2.3

Policies: 4.3.2, 4.3.3, 4.3.5

Explanation

Dunedin does not have any pressure arising from population growth. To many, that is an advantage as it helps retain the character and amenity of the City, and urban areas can be kept compact without pressure for expansion into rural areas. Disadvantages also arise however, particularly in terms of extending or upgrading infrastructural services. As a consequence, there are different degrees of access to services such as water and sewage, different standards of roading and different expectations in terms of access to community services such as libraries and schools. For most, these differences are an accepted part of people's decision to live where they do, and in some cases are considered an advantage. Generally, the level of services appropriate to an area is that which is necessary to sustain the density of use provided for in that locality.

Issue 4.1.3

The City has natural and physical resources that must be protected.

Objective: 4.2.4

Policies: 4.3.4, 4.3.6, 4.3.10

Explanation

Dunedin covers a considerable area with a spread of more than 100 km between its boundaries. It contains a wide range of landforms, ecosystems, natural vegetation and wildlife, trees, productive soils and recreational areas including parks, rivers and the coast.

Those parts of the City that have been developed over the last 150 years include transportation networks, airports, heritage buildings and precincts, and community and educational facilities, including the Campus. All of these resources have different degrees of importance, ranging from local to national. The Coastal Marine Area, although not in the City, is influenced to some extent by land use activities in the City.

Issue 4.1.4

The use and development of the natural and physical resources of the City has the potential to cause adverse effects, not all of which are readily apparent.

Objective: 4.2.5

Policies: 4.3.7 - 4.3.10

Explanation

Some of the effects of undertaking activities are readily identifiable and able to be remedied or mitigated, whereas others are less so, for example where cumulative effects arise, where the effects are long term, or where the effect triggers a change to the environment giving rise to indirect impacts.

4.2 Objectives

Objective 4.2.1

Enhance the amenity values of Dunedin.

Issue: 4.1.1

Policy : 4.3.1

Explanation

Throughout the City there is a variety of significant amenity values in different locations. These include:

- spaciousness and separation of activities in the rural area
- heritage values throughout the City
- urban and rural landscapes
- natural and recreation areas.

The Council seeks to enhance all amenity values in the future.

Objective 4.2.2

Ensure that the level of infrastructural services provided is appropriate to the potential density and intensity of development and amenity values of the area.

Issue: 4.1.2

Policies: 4.3.2, 4.3.5

Explanation

In different situations it is appropriate to provide varying degrees of infrastructure. For example, within residential areas full infrastructural services, including high standards of roading, are to be expected, while in rural residential areas and rural areas progressively lower levels of service are provided. Generally, the level of services appropriate to an area is that which is necessary to sustain the density of use provided for.

Objective 4.2.3

Sustainably manage infrastructure.

Issue: 4.1.2

Policies: 4.3.2, 4.3.3, 4.3.5

Explanation

Infrastructure is among the physical resources of the City and the Act requires that this be managed in a sustainable manner. The infrastructural services in the City are a network and changes in the degree of use, additions or deletions can have implications throughout the network.

Objective 4.2.4

Ensure that significant natural and physical resources are appropriately protected.

Issue: 4.1.3

Policies: 4.3.4, 4.3.6, 4.3.10

Explanation

The City's natural and physical resources and the adjoining coastal margins require protection from the adverse effects of activities to maintain their productive potential and life-supporting capacity, and to provide for the community's social, cultural and economic wellbeing.

Objective 4.2.5

Provide a comprehensive planning framework to manage the effects of use and development of resources.

Issue: 4.1.4

Policies: 4.3.7 - 4.3.10

Explanation

As the use and development of natural and physical resources can have effects beyond the immediate vicinity, have long term effects or contribute to cumulative effects, all adverse effects arising from the use and development need to be considered. A variety of mechanisms will be needed to address different kinds of effects.

Principal Reasons for Adopting Objectives

These objectives are adopted to promote the sustainable management of the District's natural and physical resources in an integrated manner throughout the life of the District Plan.

The Council wishes to protect the existing amenity and character of the various parts of the District. Primarily that will be achieved through managing the density and intensity of development. The level of services provided to any area is that which is necessary to sustain the density and intensity of use in that area.

4.3 Policies

Policy 4.3.1

Maintain and enhance amenity values.

Objective: 4.2.1

Method: 4.4.1

Explanation

Dunedin contains a wide range of amenity values in both urban and rural areas. Use and development of resources in some circumstances can adversely affect the pleasantness of an area, and where those effects are significant, such use and development should be avoided.

Policy 4.3.2

Avoid developments which will result in the unsustainable expansion of infrastructure services.

Objectives: 4.2.2, 4.2.3

Methods: 4.4.1 - 4.4.3

Explanation

Infrastructural services (including water, sewerage and roading) are provided to a high standard throughout areas within the 'urban/rural fence' and to a lesser degree in other areas. Within the urban/rural fence there are differing levels of services, some of which are owned by the Dunedin City Council and managed through its Strategic Plan. Expansion of those services geographically or in degree can give rise to effects in other parts of the network. Where those effects are unsustainable either in physical (capacity) terms or in wider economic terms then such development is to be avoided. Expansion of infrastructural services should be undertaken in a planned and integrated manner.

Policy 4.3.3

Promote the renovation and redevelopment of those sites within existing urban areas where there is under-utilisation of urban service infrastructure.

Objective: 4.2.3

Method: 4.4.3

Explanation

Where existing urban service infrastructure is under-utilised, Council will promote the renovation and redevelopment of sites in order to ensure the most appropriate use of the unused capacity.

Policy 4.3.4

Provide for the protection of the natural and physical resources of the City commensurate with their local, regional and national significance.

Objective: 4.2.4

Methods: 4.4.1, 4.4.2

Explanation

The City has responsibilities to its people and communities, and also regionally and nationally to protect significant natural and physical resources. This is recognised by special provisions in the Plan dealing with:

- townscape and heritage precincts
- significant heritage and townscape buildings and structures
- archaeological sites
- landscape areas
- significant trees
- areas of significant conservation value
- high class soils
- the Campus and Port Zones
- state highways, the railway and airports.

Policy 4.3.5

Require the provision of infrastructure services at an appropriate standard.

Objectives: 4.2.2, 4.2.3

Methods: 4.4.1, 4.4.3

Explanation

People and communities require infrastructural services in order to provide for their social, economic and cultural wellbeing. The standard of those services will vary depending upon the potential density and intensity of development and the level of amenity appropriate to the locality. The installation or operation of such services can give rise to adverse effects, and such effects are to be avoided, remedied or mitigated.

Policy 4.3.6

Provide access to natural and physical resources.

Objective: 4.2.4

Methods: 4.4.1, 4.4.3, 6.4.2, 11.4.3, 12.4.2

Explanation

People and communities require access to natural and physical resources and special provision must be made for access to reserves, including natural areas and the margins of rivers and the coast.

Policy 4.3.7

Use zoning to provide for uses and developments which are compatible within identified areas.

Objective: 4.2.5

Methods: 4.4.1, 8.4.1

Explanation

People and communities within Dunedin City seek a high degree of certainty as to the amenity within different parts of the City. This necessitates the adoption of zoning as a technique to provide such certainty and to ensure that the adverse effects of incompatible activities are avoided, remedied or mitigated.

Policy 4.3.8

Avoid the indiscriminate mixing of incompatible uses and developments.

Objective: 4.2.5

Method: 4.4.1

Explanation

Uses and developments may be incompatible within a location either because they generate adverse environmental effects themselves or because they require a high level of amenity which is incompatible with the area. For example, activities generating significant off-site noise or glare may be incompatible in residential areas, and activities providing child care may not be appropriate within an area providing for heavy industrial activities.

Policy 4.3.9

Require consideration of those uses and developments which:

- (a) Could give rise to adverse effects.**
- (b) Give rise to effects that cannot be identified or are not sufficiently understood at the time of preparing or changing the District Plan.**

Objective: 4.2.5

Method: 4.4.2

Explanation

The District Plan provides for permitted activities where the effects of those activities and anticipated demand are known and can be managed by appropriate conditions applying to those parts of the City which are considered suitable for those activities. Other activities require assessment on a case by case basis either as controlled or discretionary activities depending on their potential adverse effects.

The effects of some activities are either not fully understood or of such a degree that detailed assessment is necessary, and new activities will arise in the future which cannot be anticipated in advance. For these activities it is appropriate to consider them either by way of a resource consent for a non-complying activity or plan change.

Policy 4.3.10

Adopt an holistic approach in assessing the effects of the use and development of natural and physical resources.

Objectives: 4.2.4, 4.2.5

Methods: 4.4.1 - 4.4.3

Explanation

Regard must be had to the adverse effect of using or developing natural and physical resources. These effects may include long term effects, cumulative effects, effects beyond the site, and in some cases effects that go beyond the City boundary.

Principal Reasons for Adopting Policies

The policies seek to protect amenity and separate activities with incompatible effects from each other. The objectives relating to amenity are also implemented by the objectives, policies and rules of the spatial zones.

The policies recognise that the best means of ensuring that the effects of activities are avoided, remedied or mitigated is to adopt a zoning approach where activities with similar effect can be provided for in a particular area. It is also recognised that new activities not provided for, or of which the effects are unknown, must be assessed on a case by case basis.

Access to resources is an important issue for the community. The policies provide for this while ensuring any adverse effects of such access are avoided, remedied or mitigated. The policies also provide for the natural and physical resources of the City to be managed in a sustainable manner in order that they may provide for future generations.

4.4 *Methods of Implementation*

The objectives and policies of the Sustainability Section are guiding principles around which the other sections of the District Plan have been based.

Method 4.4.1 Zoning

District Plan Maps identify zones. Rules control subdivision of land and manage the effects of activities in an appropriate manner.

Policies: 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.3.4 - 4.3.8, 4.3.10

Method 4.4.2 Plan Change

Where developments are proposed which have the potential for significant or uncertain effects and which do not fit within the framework of the Plan, changes can be made to the District Plan.

Policies: 4.3.2, 4.3.4, 4.3.9, 4.3.10

Method 4.4.3 Other Plans and Strategies

Council prepares other plans and strategies outside the District Plan, including the Strategic Plan.

Policies: 4.3.2, 4.3.3, 4.3.5, 4.3.6, 4.3.10

4.5 Anticipated Environmental Results

The anticipated environmental results are:

4.5.1

The amenity of the City is retained and enhanced.

4.5.2

The City's natural and physical resources are sustainably managed.

4.5.3

People have access to natural and physical resources.