

planning news

KEEPING YOU INFORMED OF PLANNING ISSUES

Issue 02 October 2010

The Planning Team

There have been some staff changes since our earlier newsletter – Lynette Baish is now on parental leave and Isaac McIntyre is no longer with Council. The team is comprised of David McCorkindale (Project Manager District Plan Review), Dorstan Hayman (Planning Services Manager), Sue Graham (Senior Planner) Lisa Hooker (Consultant Planner) and Philip Lake (Enforcement and Compliance Officer), ably assisted by Joanne Molloy (Support Services Officer).

Whilst we no longer man the Duty Planner office, a planner is always available to assist with enquiries. For those wishing to ensure that both a planner and the Development Services Engineer are available for pre lodgement meetings, we have set aside the hours 9.00am – 10.30am Mondays, and 9.30am – 10.30am Wednesdays for this purpose. If these hours do not suit, you may always make an appointment by phoning the duty planner on Council's number 06 366 0999.

Resource Management Regulations 2010 (Discount on Administrative Charges)

You will all no doubt be aware that the above regulations came into force on 31 July 2010.

The advent of the regulations has been a catalyst to review our business processes to minimise the risk of exceeding the legislative timeframes, thereby ensuring we provide a better and more efficient service to our customers.

To minimise the risk of having an application being rejected and to assist us in meeting legislative timeframes, we would encourage applicants to follow the following procedure prior to formal lodgement of an application:

- Discuss the application with planning staff at an early stage (a duty planner is always available).
- Consult with Horizons if necessary to address any issues they may have (including the need for a Resource Consent) – contact the duty planner at Horizons (Horizons have agreed to this process). Under normal circumstances this would apply to rural subdivisions.
- Disclose in the application whether a consent is required from Horizons.
- Submit a draft application for feedback from planning staff (5 working day turn around).
- Formal lodgement.

Not all steps would need to be followed for all applications and early consultation with planning staff will ensure the appropriate steps are followed.

Communication: We aim to produce a newsletter at six monthly intervals with meetings held at similar intervals, meaning communication should take place at three monthly intervals. We view the meetings and newsletters as important communication channels and welcome feedback/input on matters that you feel are topical, or of particular interest and that you would like us to address. You can also visit our website www.horowhenua.govt.nz/Services--Facilities-/Planning for current planning information, forms and brochures.

Plan Change Update

Plan Change 20 - Rural Subdivision

The Council adopted the decision on this plan change in February 2010. Three appeals were lodged with the Environment Court. The Council is currently engaged in Environment Court mediation on these appeals.

The appeals are of a general nature and at this stage the Council has not yet made the plan change operative. New rural subdivision applications still require an assessment against both the operative plan provisions and the proposed provisions of the Council adopted decision.

Plan Change 21 - Urban Growth and Greenbelt Residential

The Council adopted the decision on this plan change in February 2010. Two appeals were lodged with the Environment Court. The Council is currently engaged in Environment Court mediation on these appeals.

The two appeals are very site specific and although the Council has not yet made the plan change operative, the Council has been treating the provisions of Plan Change 21 as being operative (with the exception of the two appeal sites). New applications can therefore focus on the plan change provisions. For information on the two appeal sites please speak with a member of the planning team.

The newly zoned Greenbelt and residential areas provide a range of new development opportunities for landowners. The first few subdivision applications for these areas have already been processed.

Plan Change 22 - Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes

Further submissions on this plan change closed 31 March 2010. Over 150 submissions and further submissions have been received. To address specific submissions, the Council has commissioned a peer review of the landscape assessment. This work is currently being undertaken. The findings of the peer review will be made available to submitters.

No date for the public hearing has been set. The timing of the hearing will be dependent on the findings of the peer review. Given the timing of the local government elections, it is not anticipated that the hearing will be held until early 2011.

Plan Change 23 - Financial Contributions

The hearing for this plan change was held 13 September 2010 and was heard by the Council Hearing Committee. Council will be adopting the plan change at a meeting on 6 October 2010. Once the decision has been adopted by Council and publicly notified, it will be subject to a 30 day appeal period.

Keep an eye on the Council website
www.horowhenua.govt.nz/yourcouncil/consultation
for ongoing updates on these Plan Changes.

District Plan Review

The Shaping Horowhenua project for the District Plan Review was launched in December 2009. Following a very successful postal survey where over 1380 responses were received, Council officers have begun background work on addressing some of the key issues identified.

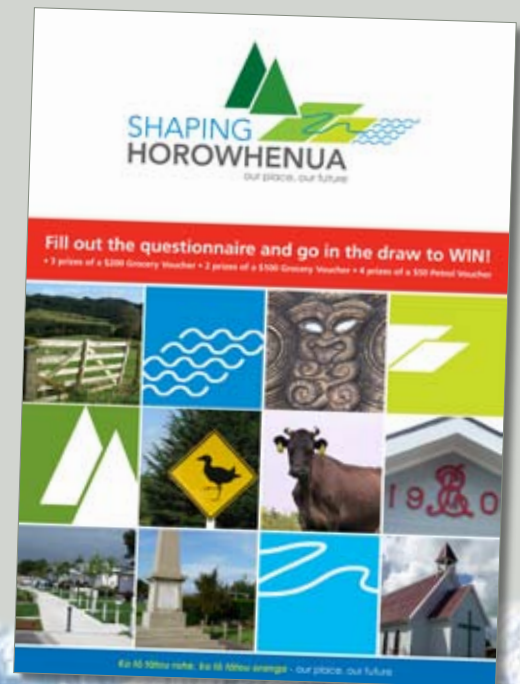
The focus on the current plan changes in recent months has resulted in some changes to the initial timeline for this project. Council officers will now be working towards notifying the proposed Plan in 2011.

Are you a regular user of the Horowhenua District Plan?

If so, we would love to hear from you. Let us know if there are any particular rules or provisions that don't work or that you find difficult to understand.

The District Plan Review gives Council the opportunity to review parts of the District Plan that are not working well or that could be improved. We would value your input as a user of our District Plan.

Send an email to districtplan@horowhenua.govt.nz to ensure that your issue is one we address.



Resource Consent Processing Statistics

Horowhenua District Council continuously monitors the actual times taken by their planners to process Resource Consent applications and assesses these times against the time limits set by the Resource Management Act.

Reports on this data are generated regularly for Council's management team and for Councillors and the Mayor. This data is also required for the Ministry for the Environment's major two-yearly survey of all of New Zealand's Local and Regional Authorities which will cover 2010/11. The last MFE survey period was 2007/08, and there have been some quite marked changes to Council's performance since then, as shown in the Tables and discussion below:

| Resource Consent Type | Number of Consents Processed | | | Percent on Time | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------------|---------|---------|
| | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2007/08 | 2008/09 | 2009/10 |
| Land Use | 155 | 93 | 122 | 75 | 90 | 95 |
| Subdivision | 162 | 115 | 60 | 54 | 83 | 82 |
| Total | 317 | 208 | 182 | 64 | 86 | 91 |

As a further performance improvement on the 2009/2010 figures our planners have processed 96.2% of Resource Consents within time for the first quarter of the current financial year (1 July - 30 September 2010).

Our current performance would place us within the top 10-15 territorial authorities in the country based on the 2007/2008 MFE survey data. This is a vast improvement on our ranking of 69 out of 84 territorial authorities in 2007/2008.

We believe a number of factors have contributed to the better performance: better quality applications, improved business practice (including pre-vetting) and the fact that with few exceptions, applications are being processed in-house. Our aim is to maintain and do our best to improve on this performance.

Fee Increase

As per Council's schedule of fees and charges, hourly rates for staff will increase from 1 October 2010 to accommodate the increase in GST. Fixed charges will remain the same. The following table illustrates hourly rates adjustments effective from 1 October 2010:

| Hourly Rates | Current Rates | 1/10/2010 |
|--------------------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Environmental Services Manager | \$150 | \$155 |
| Planning Services Manager | \$145 | \$150 |
| Senior Planner | \$135 | \$140 |
| Planner | \$120 | \$125 |
| Engineer | \$120 | \$125 |
| Administration Officer | \$ 80 | \$ 85 |
| Monitoring Officer | \$120 | \$125 |



Decisions on Horizons Proposed One Plan released

Horizons Regional Council released the decisions on the Proposed One Plan on 24 August 2010. The decisions followed a lengthy consultation, submission and hearing process and some significant changes have been made to the notified Proposed One Plan provisions as a result of the submission and hearing process.

The decision is now subject to a 60 working day appeal period. Those parts of the Plan that do not receive any appeals will be able to be made operative, while those provisions that are appealed will go through the formal Environment Court process and could result in additional changes being made.

Professionals, landowners and developers should make themselves familiar with the provisions as some of the changes may and could impact on activities they wish to undertake.

There have been a number of changes to the provisions in relation to:

- Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes
- Land Disturbance (Earthworks)
- Areas of indigenous biological diversity
- Domestic wastewater systems
- Protection of highly versatile soils

One of the challenges that the new rules create for landowners is that many of the areas which are subject to restrictions such as the areas of indigenous biological diversity or Outstanding Natural Features are not identified on maps. For landowners and developers it is going to be very important to contact the Regional Council to discuss development proposals early in the process rather than risk finding out that a specific site assessment and resource consent is necessary once they are already committed to a development.

In lodging a resource consent application with the Horowhenua District Council, it is necessary to identify if any other consents are required. Please ensure that you check the proposal against the Proposed One Plan (decision version) to accurately check any consent requirements.

There are a number of provisions in the Proposed One Plan which will require changes to be made to the Horowhenua District Plan. These changes will be addressed as part of the District Plan Review project during the next year.

Information regarding the Proposed One Plan decisions is available on Horizons' website www.horizons.govt.nz.