

Submission to Far North District Council – Draft District Plan

December 2018

Introduction

This submission to the Far North District Council on its Draft District Plan is made by the Aggregate and Quarry Association (AQA).

The AQA is the industry body representing construction material companies which produce around 85% of the estimated 50 million tonnes of aggregate and quarried materials consumed in New Zealand each year.

The quarry sector makes an important contribution to the Far North District, Northland and New Zealand economies. According to Infometrics there are 360 quarrying businesses in New Zealand directly contributing \$148m to GDP. Figures for Northland are 33 and \$8.22m respectively.

Currently an average of around nine tonnes (one rigid truckload) of stone, gravel and sand per New Zealander is required each year to meet New Zealand's ongoing infrastructure demand. With our population set to rise to between 5.3 and 7.9 million by 2060, this rise in population alone will require approximately 1.2 million new homes to be built over the next 40 years. That is 30,000 new homes every year.

Summary

In general, we support the Draft District Plan as it recognises and allows for the important contribution quarries make to the District. However, there are a number of specific points we make which we think could improve the draft plan.

General points relating to planning for quarries in District Plans

In this section, AQA presents the following generic characteristics for consideration by councils when developing district plans.

Districts such as Far North District need to secure supply of quarry materials to provide affordable housing and infrastructure now and for future generations. In order to secure supplies, it is important that planning is accommodating.

Critical to establishing protection of future aggregate sources is the identification of potential sources of aggregates and sand. We believe it is in councils' interests to identify such key resource areas within their districts and protect them.

Planners should be mindful that quarry materials are not universally available and can only be sourced from where they are located. This means it is in the interests of both the community and the quarries that potential quarry land be protected.

A particular challenge faced by the quarry sector and end-users is maintaining urban and urban-fringe quarries. Currently, the cost of a tonne of aggregate doubles when it has to travel 30 kilometres from a quarry, with additional costs for each extra kilometre thereafter. By ensuring quarries are close to their markets, transport costs (ultimately borne by consumers), transport congestion and carbon emissions are significantly reduced.

The constraints around where quarries can be located due to the location-specific nature of deposits and the need for them to be near their markets should be taken into account in council planning. Bad planning has the potential to sterilise existing and future resources which means lost opportunities for the local economy.

An important issue for quarries operating in areas of expanding residential growth is reverse sensitivity - people complaining about quarries after moving into an existing quarrying area. Due to the nature of quarry operations and its impacts - including noise, vibration and dust - it is important that non-compatible land uses such as residential areas are not allowed to encroach upon quarries. This is for the benefit and comfort of residents as well as the general public.

Quarries have a finite life, after which they are returned to the community as an improved community asset. A rehabilitated quarry can be a biodiversity or wet-land sink or a recreational or residential area. The point is, any negative environmental impacts from quarrying are relatively short term and the long-term use of the site needs to be considered. While operational quarries increasingly follow international and New Zealand best environmental and health and safety practice.

Finally, as well as providing product essential for community and economic growth, quarries are themselves a significant employer of people in skilled jobs and contributor to the local economy through their investment and by way of tax and rating contributions.

Specific Comments on the Far North District Council Draft District Plan

In general, we are pleased with the Draft District Plan as it recognises and incorporates the above points to a reasonable extent. However, there are a number of specific points we would like to make which we think could improve the draft plan.

Part B District Wide Provisions / District Wide Activities / Minerals Extraction (including quarrying)

Overview

In the Overview of the Minerals Extraction (including quarrying) section of District Wide Activities, the second sentence reads:

‘The development and extraction of mineral resources have the potential to have significant adverse effects if not appropriately managed.’

We fully accept this statement but recommend adding:

“Likewise the community can be disadvantaged if suitable plans for the extraction of minerals are not put in place” or words to this effect.

This is because it is in the interests of the community that potential quarry land and surrounding areas are protected from encroachment of non-compatible land uses.

Objectives

ME-O3 - Ancillary activities

Ancillary activities, including sales of minerals and cement production, are co-located with mineral extraction activities.

Some ancillary quarry activities may need to be located away from mineral extraction activities, for example stockpiles, agricultural lime production and secondary processing activities. The need for such separate locations will be dictated by a mix of commercial sense and public benefit.

ME-04 – Health and Safety

Mineral extraction, processing and ancillary activities are managed to ensure the health and safety of our communities and our environment.

We absolutely agree with this objective but when it comes to community health and safety it reinforces the need to get land sterilisation and reverse sensitivity issues right i.e. it is in the interests of the community that residential areas are not allowed to encroach on quarries.

Policies

ME-P2

Provide for mineral extraction and processing outside a Mineral Resource Overlay where:

- a. there is a public benefit derived from the activity;*
- b. the location is sufficiently away from urban zones or Rural Settlements;*
- c. significant adverse effects are avoided; and*
- d. other adverse effects are avoided, remedied or mitigated.*

We support this policy but note that because of the location-specific nature of aggregate resources, establishment and growth of residential areas (urban and rural) need to take account of where minerals are being located.