

4. HIGH DENSITY NON-FAMILY GROUP ACCOMMODATION

The Committee considered a report by Jonathan Clease (Planner) addressing a number of questions raised by the Committee at its meeting on 1 April 2004 regarding student accommodation, and recommending that a comprehensive section 32 analysis be undertaken as the most appropriate way of addressing the issues referred to in the report.

In recent months concerns have been raised by both Council officers and members of the community regarding a number of high density student accommodation proposals in the Living Zones. These proposals range in scale from private hostel type complexes to the ad hoc conversion of garages and the addition of extra bedrooms and sleepouts to suburban dwellings. The concerns over these developments do not relate to the housing of students per se, but rather to an increase in the density ie the number of residents on the site, and poor standards of design and amenity. The increase in density creates related problems such as increased carparking, vehicle movements, general noise, disturbance, and levels of activity.

The vast majority of properties used to accommodate students or large groups do not give rise to unacceptable effects on adjoining properties. Any potential amendments to the Plan to control the adverse effects of what is a relatively small number of inappropriate developments needs to be carefully assessed to ensure that the benefits of such amendments outweigh the costs and that any changes are both pragmatic and enforceable. In particular, it is important to consider whether there is a need for a separate policy that addresses student and non-family group accommodation, a separate definition or amendments to existing Plan definitions, and the need for new standards to control the potential adverse effects of such development.

NEED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SECTION 32 ANALYSIS

The development of higher density student and other non-family group accommodation is a complex issue for which there are no quick and easy answers. The report recommended that the most appropriate way of carefully considering the issue and the various community viewpoints was through a detailed section 32 analysis including consultation with potentially affected parties such as education establishments, and landlords and residents associations. Neither Council officers nor the Council itself can commit to a variation or plan change making specific changes to the Plan until it has considered a section 32 analysis. To do so would be an unlawful fetter of the Council's discretion to make a decision once submissions have been received and the section 32 analysis is at hand. The recommendations of the report therefore set out the matters to be considered as a part of a section 32 assessment rather than the content of a draft plan change.

The Committee **resolved**:

1. That the Council carry out an analysis of those definitions and Living Zone provisions of the Proposed Plan relating to residential activity and the provision of high density non-family group accommodation in terms of section 32 of the Resource Management Act.
2. That the Council consider any proposed plan change that may arise from the section 32 analysis after the Proposed Plan becomes operative.