

4. PROPOSED VARIATION - FLOODING ISSUES

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Corporate Plan Output: Policy Advice	

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to inform the Resource Management Committee of the developments with the proposed variation on flooding issues (including minimum floor levels) and also the work required to complete the final draft of the variation. The matters that will be outlined in this report are as follows:

- the consultation that was undertaken
- the issues that arose during consultation
- the next steps for the variation
- the latest report just released from the Inter-Government Panel on Climate Change

BACKGROUND

The Committee will be aware that Environment Canterbury have lodged references on the City Plan relating to flooding issues and that this variation is a means to address a number of these issues. The Committee will also be aware that the Council indicated in its decision on submissions lodged by Environment Canterbury that the concept of higher minimum floor levels (above the Building Act standard) had merit and should be investigated further with a view to a variation being prepared. In association with preparing this variation attempts have been made to consult with communities affected by the proposed rules.

CONSULTATION

The consultation that has been undertaken in association with this variation is outlined below:

- An article was written about the proposed variation in the November City Scene. The article invited people to phone or write in with their comments.
- An article was also written in the ESU Gazette. The Gazette is distributed to professionals working in the field of land development including builders and architects.
- Articles were also written in the National Business Review and the Business Monthly about the proposed variation.
- Public meetings were held at the following venues for interested people: Shirley Service Centre, Union Church in Redcliffs, Beckenham Service Centre, Sockburn Service Centre, Spencerville Hall, and the Linwood Service Centre. Two meetings were also held at Council for people working in the area of land development (surveyors, builders etc).
- Letters and a copy of the discussion document have been sent to Ngai Tahu as well as the local Runanga. The letter that has been sent includes an invitation to meet to discuss the issues raised in the discussion document. A letter has been received back from Ngai Tahu, however, no communication has been received from the local Runanga.
- Meetings have been held with staff at Environment Canterbury.
- A letter and a copy of the discussion document have been sent to the local office of the Ministry for the Environment. A reply has been received which is supportive of the approach recommended in the discussion document.

ISSUES THAT HAVE ARISEN FROM THE CONSULTATION

In terms of the meetings that were held there was generally not a large attendance at each meeting. Residents groups were typically represented at most meetings. The meeting held at Redcliffs was attended by a considerable number of people which no doubt can be at least partly attributed to the flooding in October last year in that area. The number of people who attended each meeting was probably a result of the way in which meetings were advertised as well as the time of the year that the meetings were held. Community advocates in each of the service centres organised the meetings. Some of the meetings were advertised in local newspapers while others were not.

In general the people who attended the meetings were pleased with the opportunity to talk about these issues. Overall there was not large-scale opposition to the proposed changes.

The following is a summary of the issues that have been raised through consultation:

- Concerns regarding increased development on the hills causing increased runoff onto the flat.
- Concerns were raised about site specific areas such as possible development in the Cashmere-Worksleys Valley.
- Most people were of the opinion that the proposed exemptions to the minimum floor level rules need to be increased to enable extensions of 25m² to 30m² and also to permit the erection of double garages. Some people were of the view that non-habitable spaces should be exempt from the proposed rule.
- Concern was also raised about the steps that the Council is taking to protect existing development from the effects of sea level rise and from flooding. People in Redcliffs were concerned about the height and also the present state (in some locations) of the sea wall in Celia Street.
- Concern was also expressed about the difficulties people will have meeting recession plane requirements because of increased minimum floor levels. People were particularly concerned about the effect on existing narrow sections.
- At a number of the meetings people raised the issue of maintenance. Some people were of the view that if maintenance was done on a regular basis then there would be no need for the minimum floor level rule.
- Concern was also expressed about drainage issues particularly when new houses are built on sections that adjoin existing houses which are built at lower levels.
- Concern was raised about property values (in particular at Redcliffs). Some people also raised the issue about the effect on property sales through information being included on a LIM.
- Some people felt that the average life of a house is only 50 years and therefore we should only be planning to this level.
- At the meeting at Spencerville people felt that the Regional Council could be doing more to encourage contractors to excavate gravel from the Waimakariri River.
- A few people raised the question as to whether sea level rise was actually happening in Canterbury.

THE NEXT STEPS FOR THE VARIATION

Following public consultation there are some matters that need to be worked through prior to the final variation being drafted. These matters include:

- Investigating the issue associated with narrow sections;
- Revisiting the proposed recommended measure contained in the discussion document, relating to filling;
- Resolving issues relating to the interaction between the Building Act and the Resource Management Act; and
- Investigating issues relating to maintenance.

In respect of effects on property values an opinion has been sought from a valuer (Gary Sellars of Fright Aubrey). As part of preparing this report Mr Sellars inquired about the effects on property values in situations where people are required to erect buildings at higher minimum floor levels in different areas of the country. He found that the effect on property values was not significant. He was, however, of the view that for the areas in Bexley and Celia Street where increased minimum sections sizes are proposed that there will be effects on property values, particularly if people are no longer able to subdivide.

It was also his opinion that following public notification of the variation that concerns will be raised by a number of people which may impact on property values. In the long term it was his view that these concerns will decrease – particularly if there are no major flood events.

It is intended that the final variation will be completed by mid-April. This will be in time for the agenda for the May 2001 Resource Management Committee meeting.

LATEST REPORT FROM IPCC ON SEA LEVEL RISE

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has recently released a summary of their latest report (the culmination of investigations of hundreds of scientists from many countries).

The report indicates that most of the global warming over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities. Since the 1860s the world has warmed by 0.6°C and is projected to increase a further 1.4-5.8°C by the end of this century.

Global mean sea level is predicted to rise between 0.09 and 0.88 metres over the next 100 years. Previous estimates were between 0.13 and 0.94 metres. Note: The proposed variation for minimum floor levels in tidal areas is based on a best estimate for sea level rise of 0.5 metres by 2100. This figure is still consistent with the latest report.

The report also states that rising sea levels due to thermal expansion of the oceans are projected to continue for hundreds of years after greenhouse gas concentrations have stabilised. Additionally ice sheets will continue to react to climate warming and contribute to sea level rise for thousands of years after the climate has stabilised.

Note: This information was presented to the Environment Committee in February.

A lunchtime seminar on climate change is being held for interested Councillors and staff on 8 March, when two scientists from NIWA (National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research) will present the latest information and discuss implications for Christchurch and Canterbury.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the information be received.
 2. That the Committee support in principle the final drafting of the proposed variation on this issue.

Chairman's Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.