

STAFF REPORT

TO: Chair and Members, Engineering Services Committee

FROM: Policy Planner, Sonya Leusink-Sladen
Development Engineer, Dugald Ley

REFERENCE: E362

DATE: 21 March 2007

**SUBJECT: ENGINEERING STANDARDS AND TASMAN RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT PLAN ALIGNMENT ISSUES**

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to outline issues relating to inconsistencies between Council's Engineering Standards (ES) and the Tasman Resource Management Plan (TRMP), in the way that they manage particular resources in the Tasman District.

The report seeks the approval and support of Council for Engineering and Environment and Planning Departments to continue to work together towards aligning the two documents.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 What is the problem?

Currently there are differences between the way in which Council's ES and the TRMP manage stormwater drainage and the road network.

One of the reasons why engineers and planners deal with the same matters differently lies within the differences between their respective legal responsibilities:

1. The Local Government Act, via annual planning and Long Term Community Council Planning processes, guides Engineers to manage assets under Council's control to achieve health, safety and well-being of people and communities in the most effective and efficient way;
2. The Resource Management Act via the Tasman Resource Management Plan requires Planning staff to manage natural and physical resources sustainably, which includes avoiding, remedying or mitigating adverse effects in resource use or development.

In practice this can lead to differences in the way that resources are managed.

For example, current ES require in most cases that stormwater from urban roads be managed using kerb and channel solutions and a piped reticulation network. This method may well be appropriate and necessary in many situations, and it will manage the flow

effects of stormwater created by the road surface. The risk of inundation and property damage are also avoided in a cost effective way.

This solution, however, may not always be the best one in terms of managing all of the effects of stormwater. Other things like water contamination and groundwater replenishment are not always fully considered and addressed when the water is simply piped away.

In the TRMP, alternative solutions are encouraged where appropriate. These solutions can be used to address a range of adverse effects of stormwater on the environment. This means using a method of management that cleans or treats the stormwater and enhances ground infiltration.

The differences between the goals and methods of engineers and planners creates inefficiencies in the process and poor outcomes for the environment.

2.2 Why bother changing?

There are problems that can arise from the differences in the way that the two documents require resources to be managed. If no action is taken, the following problems will continue to surface:

- *Uncertainty for applicants and developers.*
What can a developer or landowner expect in relation to road design and stormwater management? A “different story” may be told by an engineer than a planner. Both will be correct but both will be different. This is confusing for the applicant and reflects poorly on Council.
- *Inadequate outcomes.*
Poor outcomes for the environment or high cost solutions for the management of Council assets can result from the current situation. Either the ES or the TRMP may be compromised.
- *Conflict or tension.*
Tension can arise between resource consent conditions and engineering bottom-line standard requirements. Subdivision consent conditions may impose requirements that become problematic when they reach the stage of engineering approval.
- *Inefficient, costly processing of consents.*
Lack of clarity and guidance can result in confusion, misunderstandings and inefficient outcomes through the development process. Litigation can be the result of poor decision-making and poor end-results.

A united front and working together of both Departments must be achieved so that these issues can be addressed.

3. OPTIONS

3.1 What can we do to fix the problem?

There is no simple immediate solution, but a number of actions that should be taken:

1. Align the ES and TRMP based on agreed management standards that satisfy both the RMA and LGA;
2. Make sure that consents process adequately and appropriately (in terms of timing) address all of the information and design requirements to satisfy engineers as well as planners, before consent is granted;
3. Continue to improve communication between planning and engineering staff, and encourage early consultation with developers and applicants;

Regarding communication and improvements to process in accordance with “2” and “3” above, these matters are already being actioned.

Regarding “1” above, this report seeks Committee understanding and support of changes deemed necessary to align the TRMP and the ES. Current review processes that have relevance to stormwater and road design matters are set out in Table 1.

Table 1 – Engineering and Planning Alignment Opportunities

Review Process	Key Change	Process and Timeframe
Engineering Standards Review	<p>Include an alternative assessment framework for stormwater and road network.</p> <p>Enable and encourage acceptable alternative engineering solutions where appropriate and cost effective, alongside any standard solution, and clarify the asset service outcomes as context for these solutions.</p>	<p>The 2004 ES are being reviewed at present in accordance with 3 yearly review requirements.</p> <p>The draft revised version will be reported to the ESC in due course</p> <p>Key Staff – Dugald Ley/Sonya Leusink-Sladen</p>
Variation 44 – Road Area Standards review	<p>V44 was originally initiated to update the TRMP to align them with the ES streetworks standards.</p> <p>However, they may need further revision in light of this process, ensuring that road design and construction alternatives are not “discouraged” by permitted activity standards that are based on conventional engineering standards requirements.</p>	<p>Staff reporting on submissions to Variation 44 is currently “on hold” as staff reconsider the best approach to road design and construction standards within the TRMP and the ES.</p> <p>Update report to April EPC outlining staff recommended direction for progress.</p> <p>Key Staff – Neil Jackson</p>
Variation 49 & 50 – Richmond South Development Area	<p>Staff recommendations will be recommending the ES review and Stormwater Variation as “other actions” required to ensure alignment between the two documents.</p>	<p>The hearing of submissions on the RSDA is due April 11th, with deliberations and decisions to follow.</p> <p>Key Staff – Steve Markham/Sonya Leusink-Sladen</p>

Proposed Stormwater Variation	To include cross-references to the [updated] Engineering Standards.	The Variation was reported to the Committee on 28 th of March for notification Key Staff – Sonya Leusink-Sladen
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The issues are dependent on each other, which means that all processes and recommended changes must be thoroughly integrated. In respect of changes to the TRMP, an additional Variation may be required to cover changes. It is recommended that Council acknowledge and support the need to align engineering and planning outcomes.

4. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Engineering Services Committee:

1. **Receive** the report
2. **Endorse** the principle that the Engineering Standards and the Tasman Resource Management Plan are aligned to show consistency
3. **Note** that in the review of the Engineering Standards, a restructuring to specify the asset service outcome, the standard engineering solution and any acceptable alternative solutions, will assist in clarity and consistency with TRMP.

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