

Draft District Plan Review:

Energy

OVERVIEW: ENERGY

This draft chapter has been prepared as part of Council's District Plan Review Project. The structure and layout of the chapter reflects the intended reformatting of the existing District Plan in accordance with the National Planning Standards 2019.

Council is working on reviewing the whole District Plan at present. The following overview is focused on the Energy (ENG) Chapter of the draft Plan.

As a draft plan change we expect to be making changes to the provisions as we respond to matters raised in feedback, new technical advice received, and any change in national or regional direction. These changes will be made before public notification of the plan change documents under the Resource Management Act 1991 takes place. Public notification of the plan change will enable formal submissions to be lodged which can then be considered as part of a hearing and final decision-making process.

The focus of the Energy Chapter is to provide clear guidance on how the Plan addresses and deals with energy production within the District. Energy is critical to the functioning of the District. Increasing demand for energy at a local level has an impact on the limited resources available to provide energy – while non-renewable resources such as gas and coal will eventually be depleted, renewable resources including hydro, solar, wind power, and biomass sources are becoming increasingly more prominent and viable. These sources, however, may also bring about adverse effects on the environment, such as visual impacts and the impact on natural ecosystems.

The current District Plan does not provide much guidance when it comes to allowing for renewable energy activities however, these are becoming more and more prevalent within the District in the form of solar and wind farms. Therefore, the focus intent of this chapter is to provide a clear framework to manage these activities as and when they arise across the District. It is an accepted fact that these activities, when proposed at a large scale, require resource consent approval. Thus, the Plan needs to provide clear thresholds for what is allowed as of right versus what triggers consent, and when consent is triggered, what are the key matters that need to be addressed.

Due to the number of substantive changes and consequential changes proposed, the new Energy Chapter will replace the existing chapter in its entirety. The main changes proposed by draft Plan Change, for the ENG, include:

- Updating the Objectives and Policies to reflect a new approach of enabling new renewable energy activities provided they carefully address the associated potential effects. This includes making it easier for domestic and private scale activities such as solar panels.
- Updating the Objectives and Policies to reflect the new District Plan approach whilst continuing to ensure that the potential effects on the environment are carefully managed.

- Updating the rule framework to make it clear when consent is required for a proposed activity, in particular setting clear thresholds to inform the level of scrutiny and assessment for the different scales of activity.
- Introducing standards for siting of energy activities to help inform the consenting thresholds.
- Updating the policies and matters of discretion to ensure that there is clear guidance on the matters that need to be addressed and satisfied before new activities can proceed.
- Recognising that these types of activities have the potential to create effects on adjoining landowners and ensuring that the Plan has clear direction for the protection of these properties.

PROVISION-BY-PROVISION SUMMARY OF CHANGES – ENERGY

Provision	Change	Primary reason for change
Introduction	New text added which provides updated commentary on purpose of the Energy Chapter and what it provides for, including promoting and enabling development of renewable energy sources.	To better align the zone description with the National Planning Standards description of a Energy Chapter and to highlight the wider range of activities now anticipated within the District.
ENG-Objectives	Objectives added to include the need for sustainable and efficient energy sources to be provided for within the district.	To better reflect that the renewable energy sources are becoming more common and that they form an important solution to energy production not only in the district but also across the country. To recognise that these activities need to be provided for and that in some cases, while not discouraged, careful consideration of the surrounding environment needs to be had.
ENG-Policies	Policies added to include the need for energy production to be provided for and to reflect an intent to provide for such activities provided the outcomes are appropriate for the location it is located within.	To better reflect that the renewable energy sources are becoming more common and that they form an important solution to energy production not only in the district but also across the country. To recognise that these activities need to be provided for and that in some cases, while not discouraged, careful consideration of the surrounding environment needs to be had.
ENG-Policies	Policies added to include clear direction on the key matters to be maintained and addressed for new development within the district.	To clearly outline the key outcomes sought for the district and to articulate the matters that are to be addressed for new development before it can occur. We want to ensure that the Plan contains enough regulatory control to achieve the desired outcomes but at the same time not inhibit new development from occurring.

Provision	Change	Primary reason for change
ENG-Rules	Updates to convert the old rule structure into the new National Planning Standards format.	To align what is provided for within the zone with the National Planning Standards.
ENG-Rules	Updates to ensure that the list of activities and variation of energy production types are provided for within the district are clear and concise.	To recognise and provide for the wide range of activities that can occur within the District and provide clear direction on the matters that are to be addressed through the consenting process. Clearer differentiation between scale of activities is also provided to allow for smaller scale activities to have a clear and simple process and for larger scale proposals, the process remains simple but the level of consideration is slightly more detailed to ensure the desired outcomes are achieved.
ENG-Rules	New Rules added to specifically provide for solar farms and solar energy production.	To allow for solar production to occur within the district but to ensure that it is located and undertaken in an appropriate manner. The intent is to make it clear what the parameters are for this development typology.
ENG-Matters of Discretion	Additional (and updated) matters of discretion added to allow for careful consideration of resource consent applications.	To require careful consideration of the design outcomes of new proposals including explicit direction around the design, layout, and configuration of new activities and the associated servicing arrangements, in particular access and stormwater management. Also, to enable Council to achieve the desired design outcomes through the consenting process.
ENG-Standards	Additional (and updated) Standards added to reflect current best practice for managing energy production across the zones within the Plan..	<p>The way in which energy production activities is occurring has changed over time. The standards, therefore, require updating to better reflect current practice. In some cases the existing plan does not include any standards or direction to manage such activities.</p> <p>The focus of the new plan is to set clear thresholds for the consenting process to inform the level of consideration required from application to application. New controls are needed to ensure that a clear indication is provided in regard to the desired outcomes across the different zones. The Plan aims to clearly define the thresholds for regulatory intervention depending on the size and scale of the proposal.</p>