

## What is an Assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE)?

Pursuant to the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) **every resource consent application must include an AEE**. An AEE is a statement about the effects a proposed activity may have on the environment.

Every activity has some effect on the environment. These effects can be positive or negative. For example, the redevelopment of an old commercial area might produce a more pleasant shopping environment. However, a new building may cause loss of privacy for its neighbours and/or an increase in traffic.

An AEE describes all the environmental effects of the activity on the environment and the ways any negative effects are to be remedied, avoided or mitigated.

## What is meant by 'effect'?

Effects can be:

- Positive or negative
- Temporary or permanent
- Past, present or future
- Cumulative (arising over time or in combination with other effects)

The definition of 'effects' in the RMA includes any effects, regardless of scale, intensity, duration or frequency. It includes any potential effect of high probability or of low probability which has high potential impact.

## What is meant by 'environment'?

The term 'environment' includes:

- Ecosystems and the constituent parts, including people and communities
- All natural and physical resources
- Amenity values

The RMA specifically does not require the Council to consider effects on trade competition or the financial viability of an operation. Accordingly information relating to the financial viability of your proposal and its effect on competitors should not be included in your AEE.

## What kind of information is required for the AEE?

The amount of information you need to include in the AEE will depend on how significant the environmental effects will be. You must provide at least:

- A description of the proposal
- A description of the site and locality
- A site plan that is drawn to scale and any other relevant plans such as elevations of a new building
- A description of the actual and potential environmental effects of the activity
- Where these effects are likely to be significant, a description of available alternatives
- A description of the ways in which adverse environmental effects can be avoided, remedied and mitigated
- A record of your consultation with neighbours and any other affected parties
- A discussion of any monitoring of environmental effects that may be required to control a certain effect

## How do I prepare an AEE?

Taking the time to prepare a careful and thorough AEE will save you time and frustration later. Depending on the scale of the activity you may wish to obtain assistance from an expert to prepare your application. (Such experts include engineers, resource management specialists and surveyors.)

Remember that any application needing resource consent will have some environmental effects. The Council will not accept an AEE that says there are no environmental effects from the activity.

Think about what you are proposing to do and how it will change the site. To help you prepare your AEE you can talk to the Council's Duty Planner to determine which parts of the District Plan are relevant to your application and the activity status of your proposal, as this can make a difference to the type of AEE you need to prepare. For example, for 'controlled' and 'restricted discretionary activities' your AEE only needs to address the matters identified in the District Plan, while for 'discretionary' and 'non-complying' activities your AEE will need to address all of the potential environmental effects resulting from the proposal.

## What kind of effects are there?

Some examples of Environmental Effects include:

- Changes to the character of the street or the surrounding landscape
- Noise
- Silt run-off
- Dust
- Shading
- Modification and/or destruction of historical or cultural sites
- Vegetation loss
- Effects on water quality
- Loss of privacy
- Smell
- Visual impact
- Loss of recreational values

You should also address the duration of the effects. For example, the construction a building may result in the following:

- Temporary effects – dust, noise, silt run-off
- Permanent effects – loss of privacy, visual effects
- Cumulative effects – changes in street character

If you decide that some of the effects are significant you may need to consider changing your proposal to ensure that these effects are avoided, remedied or mitigated.

**Please refer to Rule 3.5 of the Operative Whakatāne District Plan, which outlines in detail the requirements for resource consent applications. Section 3.5(f) is included on the next page for immediate reference regarding environmental effects.**

## 3.5(f) Operative Whakatāne District Plan

**An assessment of environment effects** which includes an analysis of the suitability of the site for the proposed activity and avoidance, remediation or mitigation of adverse effects having regard to, but not limited to:

- i. Topography and other physical features;
- ii. Transport assessment including traffic volume, type and movement to the site as well as onsite movements. An assessment must include details of the width and grade of proposed vehicular accessways and proposed roads and impacts on the roading network including bridge/s over waterways (if applicable);
- iii. Provision of services including an assessment of the means, location and direction of telecommunication lines, sewage, stormwater disposal and drainage, and considering any off-site effects. Details on ground water levels may be required to confirm compliance with the “Operative On-site Effluent Treatment Regional Plan – December 2006”. For activities exceeding a combined site coverage of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> the Council will require technical evaluations of the existing and anticipated stormwater flows and the necessity or otherwise of retention ponds or other stormwater control and/or mitigation devices;
- iv. Impacts on indigenous vegetation or habitat of indigenous fauna, or known significant biodiversity areas including the scale of any vegetation clearance and methods of restoration;
- v. The relationship of tangata whenua with lands, resources and taonga including statutory areas of significance to Tangata Whenua and settled iwi;
- vi. Heritage features, including Scheduled Heritage and Archaeological sites (see Appendix 16.7.1 and 17.6.2) and the means by which these areas will be managed;
- vii. The scale and staging of earthworks (including cut-and-fill details), mining/quarrying and exploration (including stripping, stockpiling of topsoil and overburden) and programme of restoration;
- viii. The proposed method of addressing any potential or actual reverse sensitivity effects that may arise as a result of the activity;
- ix. Visual impact on the surrounding landscape of:
  - the scale of the activity;
  - height, cross-sectional area, colour and texture of structures;
  - distance of structures to site boundaries;
  - degree of compatibility with surrounding properties;
  - site location in terms of the general locality, topography, geographical features, adjoining land uses, ie landscape character, rural houses;
  - proposed planting, fencing and other landscaping treatments;
  - proposed signs;
  - civil aviation requirements for height, colour and design requirements of buildings, lighting on site;
  - the opportunity for site sharing of works and network utilities;
  - the visual quality, visual absorption, visual rating of outstanding landscape units;
  - any earthworks necessary for the creation of building platforms, fire breaks, access;
  - whether existing landscape features are integrated into the new activity; and
  - such an assessment may include the preparation of a Landscape Plan
- x. The provisions of any relevant management plan under any other legislation;
- xi. Any possible alternative locations or methods for undertaking the activity;
- xii. Amenity values existing in the area and in particular the ambient sound levels currently experienced, any shadowing effects, lighting, glare and vibration effects;
- xiii. Noise effects and mitigation including noise insulation methods associated with the use of generators, fans, blowers, refrigeration equipment, forklifts and outdoor loading operations;
- xiv. The probability of risk or harm to the environment (including people and communities) from the operation of the activity, including the use of hazardous substances;
- xv. The provisions of any relevant iwi or hapū planning document;
- xvi. Natural hazard risk to human health and safety and to the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of people and communities and other aspects of the environment.