

Plan Change 113 – Ruakaka Racecourse

An application has been made by Whangarei Racing Club Inc. for a private plan change to the Whangarei District Council's District Plan. The plan change (PC 113) relates to the 50 hectares of land owned by the Whangarei Racing Club on the coast at the end of Peter Snell Road, Ruakaka (legally described as Lot 2 DP 210980 CT NA 139A/702.)

The plan change proposes to rezone the racecourse site from Coastal Countryside Environment to a new zone being the *Ruakaka Equine Environment* (REE). That REE would provide for equine (horse) activities as well as residential and other non-equine related activities such as educational activities, visitor accommodation and events.

The detail provided here is an executive summary of the application. The full application and supporting information can be viewed at WDC offices or online at www.wdc.govt.nz

The site is bounded by Crown land on three sides - to the north, east and south - and beyond that by the coast and the Ruakaka Estuary. To the west, the site borders proposed residential subdivisions and a dune lake. The site is mostly flat, with some undulating land towards the western boundary. It is between 4 to 5 metres above sea level. Access into the area is by Peter Snell Road and Marsden Point Road.

The objective of the Plan Change is to secure the long-term viability of equine activities on the site while enabling the expansion of training and horse racing-related activities and compatible commercial, residential and equine-education cluster development. The plan change also provides a framework for future, high quality residential and mixed use development, while respecting the values of the surrounding environment. The natural character of the coastline is to be protected, and any significant adverse effects of development, on the adjacent reserves, are to be avoided. There will be a stepped approach to redevelopment and the use of requisite policies and the preparation of management plans as discretionary activities prior to any large-scale non-equine development. This will include detailed amenity and effects consideration for the precinct planning stage, within the management plan. Such plans will be required for the whole of each precinct to secure integrated outcomes.

The Ruakaka Racecourse has been in operation since the 1970s. Many community groups use the grounds and facilities when racing is not occurring. The facilities on the site include horse training and accommodation facilities, office/administration block, and space for a pony club. The grandstand is located on a constructed hill, which sits approximately 10 metres above ground level. Within the grandstand are a number of bars, viewing areas, members lounge and terraced seats which are covered for weather protection. The top of the grandstand is approximately 10m above the level of the hill, with the commentator's box being the highest building element. The beach provides an important amenity feature for the wider area, used for swimming, walking and fishing. The Crown land adjacent to the racecourse has high habitat and wildlife values and includes a Wildlife Refuge further to the south at the river mouth. The main adverse impacts on these areas come from cats, dogs and other animal and plant pests, as well as the human impacts from people using the area. A number of residential properties line the escarpment across the estuary to the west of the site, with expansive private views out over the racecourse site and to the Hen and Chicken Islands.

In 2010 a Master Plan was prepared for the Ruakaka Racecourse, investigating future land use and development options. It was not a detailed plan showing individual uses or buildings, but illustrated general activities and building envelopes. This conceptual Master Plan provided a framework from which a proposed Plan Change to the Whangarei District Plan could subsequently be prepared and notified. The Master Plan was an "inquiry by design" exercise, and was not an actual development proposal being promoted for the land. It allowed for the consideration of alternative activities and land uses and development.

Racecourse related activities are provided for across the new Environment, along with compatible commercial activities in specific Precincts. Development of activities additional to these is largely dependent upon preparation and approval of specific Management Plans for individual precincts. There will be four (4) precincts having specific objectives. The re-zoning will allow for a maximum of 350 dwelling units on the whole 50 hectare site. Any residential type units such as visitor

accommodation or retirement villages or similar uses are in addition to this maximum number. Before the development of more than 100 dwellings, a covenant is to be entered into by the Whangarei Racing Club in favour of the Council to protect the long term use of the track and infield area as an equine-related activity area.

The four Precincts are the Infield and Racetrack (Precinct A), the Southern Precinct (Precinct B), the Western Precinct (Precinct C) and the Eastern Precinct (Precinct D.) Within the provisions for each Precinct, relevant activities are either:

- Permitted (generally related to equine use) activities; or
- Require consent as (unrestricted) discretionary activities; or
- Require a Management Plan to first be submitted to the Council and approved.

A list of criteria (called 'requisite policies') is provided which must be met for the application to proceed on a non-notified basis.

The objectives for each of the proposed Precincts are as follows:

- Infield and Racetrack Precinct is to create an equine and recreational cluster within the infield area and provide effective race day facilities while maintaining an open space character.
- Southern Precinct is to allow the development of a range of residential accommodation that is compatible with the surrounding environment and land uses and provides linkages through the site to the coast.
- Western Precinct is to allow the development of houses and stabling facilities that are designed to be stepped back from the interface with the dune lake.
- Eastern Precinct is to allow the development of the existing grandstand, capitalising on the views from the existing landform, to provide for multiple uses that may include watching racing, public open space, accommodation, conference centre facilities and related commercial development.

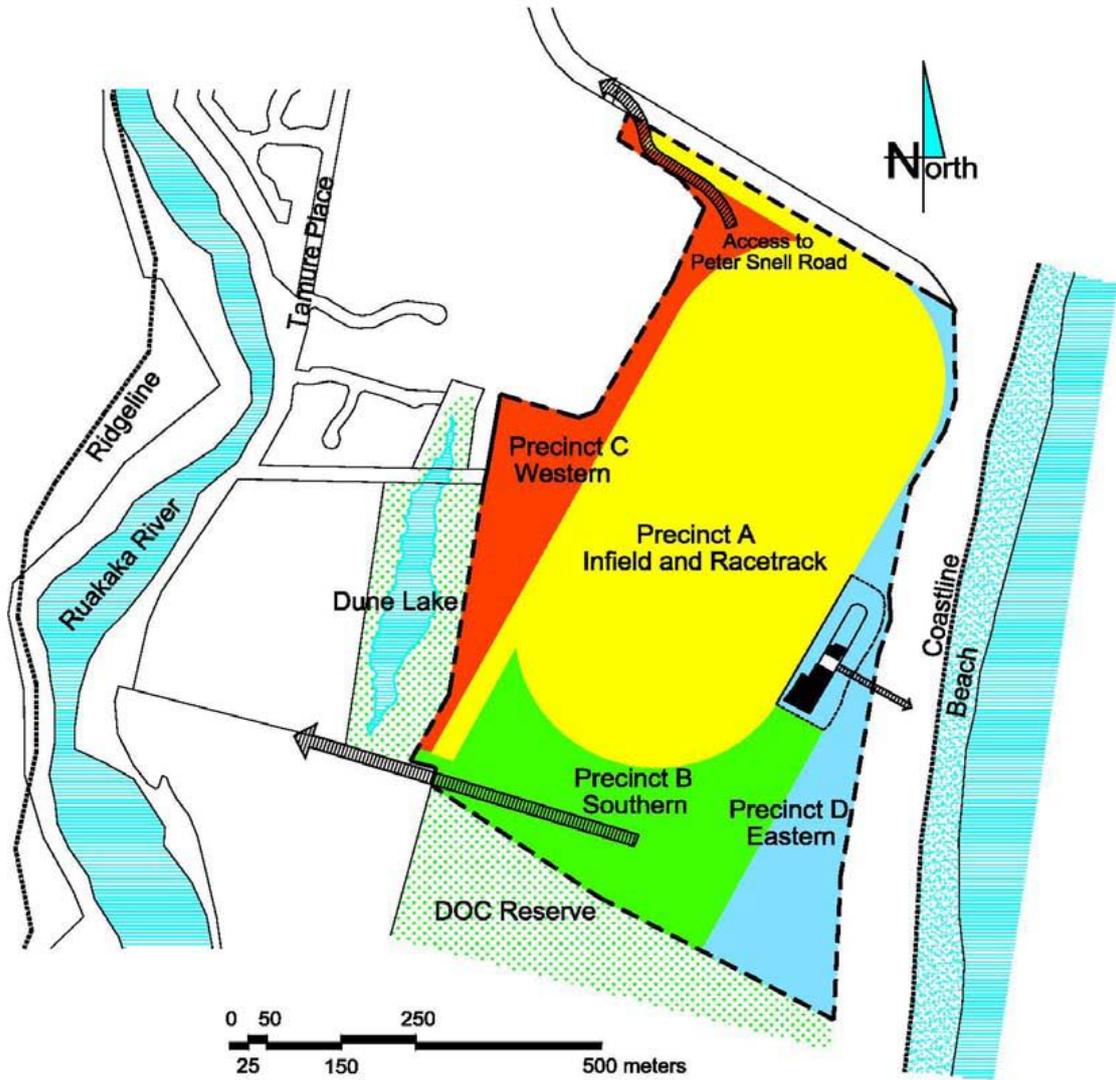
Management Plans are to be prepared for the whole of each Precinct except for the Infield and Racetrack Precinct A. They are to set out how each Precinct is to be developed, in a way that responds to and is compatible with the environmental effects assessments, while taking into account the objectives and policies. They will contain, as relevant to each Precinct:

- Activities, and their activity status (permitted or discretionary)
- Performance standards for activities
- Building envelopes (footprints, height, separation, coverage)
- Building design assessment matters and criteria
- Proposed road layout and cross-sections
- Pedestrian and cycle facilities
- Landscaping requirements
- Staging / timing of development
- Infrastructure funding
- Stormwater management
- Identification and protection of areas of cultural heritage significance
- Ecological effects assessment

The following changes to the District Plan are required to enable this Plan Change request:

- The addition of a new section 'Ruakaka Equine Environment' to the District Plan with objectives and policies, new rules and associated explanation and reasons, and a precinct map;
- Alterations to Planning Maps to detail the area that the Ruakaka Equine Environment relates to; and
- Other consequential changes necessary to fully integrate the plan change into the District Plan, being the introduction of a new definition 'Equine related activities'.

PROPOSED REE



Legend:

- | | | | |
|---|-----------|---|---------------------------|
|  | Coastline |  | Grandstand mound |
|  | Dune Lake |  | Grandstand buildings |
| | |  | Possible connections |
| | |  | Public plaza (indicative) |