

RA Rural Area

This section forms an introduction to the provisions relevant to the rural area. The Description and Expectations, Objectives, Policies, Notification Rules and Eligibility Rules shall form the basis of any resource consent assessment in addition to those specified in individual Environments.

RA1.1 Description and Expectations

The rural area, outside of the urban areas of Whangarei City, Ruakaka and Marsden Town Centre includes rural and coastal villages (three of which are identified growth nodes) and rural living clusters. More than 80% of the land area of the Whangarei District is rural. The rural area extends to all of the District boundaries adjoining Far North and Kaipara Districts; it also encompasses land areas on the coast. These coastal areas contain similar rural productive uses, but have the added influence of the coastal environment.

The rural area is comprised of a diverse landmass, including a variety of landforms, significant areas of natural biodiversity and a number of at risk aquifers stream and rivers. The area also contains a vast roading network including State Highways, and major network utility services. The vast majority of the land is classified as having moderately productive soil types, being generally identified as stable productive hill country.

The rural area has a diverse mix of land use ranging from living in villages and lifestyle areas to productive uses such as forestry, horticulture, agricultural activities and industry that support primary production activities. There is a continuing demand for rural land for rural tourism and recreation use. The transportation of goods throughout the rural area, primarily on Strategic Forestry Routes and State Highways, is not only essential to the economic viability of Whangarei District but also neighbouring Districts.

As a predominantly working environment, the rural area has particular amenity and environmental values which are important to rural people. This area is typified by the close economic, social and physical links between the rural resources and the people who live and work with them. Activities within the rural area reflect the productive nature of land and resources; these contribute to 'rural' characteristics. The resulting character defines the expected rural scale of development and level of effects. Included are such features as large allotments with very low site coverage and limited areas of impervious surface, buildings that are predominantly a minor element within the environment, with a few large buildings that are generally industrial and utilitarian in character. Noise and odour associated with animals and farming activities are expected within the rural area.

It is important to strengthen the District's economy by providing for an on-going range of land use activities in the Rural Area. However the priority is to sustain the productive potential of the land and the rural character and amenity values that are a key element of the District. Productive usage includes farming, forestry, quarrying, dairy processing, cement manufacturing, recreation and tourism. It also includes sustaining our biodiversity and productive ecosystems as these are equally important to the health and wellbeing of communities and the economy.

Consistent with the direction of the Whangarei District Council Growth Strategy and Sustainable Futures 30I50 2009, consolidation of development particularly residential and commercial is key for the Rural Area. Historical uncoordinated subdivision and development patterns have resulted in cumulative effects on resources such as biodiversity, heritage, landscape, productive land and have led to constraints on the viability of some farming and horticultural operations.

To address this, residential and commercial subdivision and development is expected to largely occur where and when it has been planned for, rather than in a scattered pattern of development. Careful management of competing land use is required to avoid reverse sensitivity effects.

The Urban Growth Strategy 2009 identifies land in close proximity to Whangarei City that is influenced by the urban environment and may be required for future urban growth, consistent with Whangarei District Council Growth Strategy and Sustainable Futures 30/50 and Council adopted Urban Structure Plans.

To address the diverse and varied issues and outcomes associated with the rural area, six different Environments apply:

Rural Production Environment (RPE)

Rural Production Environment provides primarily for the productive use and development of rural land and resources. Residential, commercial and industrial land use and development is expected to be secondary to productive uses.

Rural Living Environment (RLE)

Rural Living Environment provides for the on-going lifestyle development of land and rural living activities in locations that have an existing density of lifestyle development.

Strategic Rural Industry Environment (SRIE)

Strategic Rural Industry Environment recognises and provides for the on-going operation of established larger scale industrial developments within the rural area.

Rural Village Residential Environment (RVRE)

Rural Village Residential Environment provides for the residential development and living activities of established rural villages.

Rural Village Centre Environment (RVCE)

Rural Village Centre Environment provides for and protects the commercial centre of larger rural villages.

Rural Village Industry Environment (RVIE)

Rural Village Industry Environment recognises and provides for the on-going operation of established industrial developments within rural villages.

RA 1.2 Rural Area Objectives

1. Protect the long-term viability of the productive functions of rural land in a manner that delivers economic benefit and sustains the environment.
2. Avoid, remedy or mitigate reverse sensitivity impacts especially in relation to established and productive rural activities.
3. Avoid cumulative impacts in the rural environment by preventing lifestyle subdivision and development outside of planned areas.
4. Avoid development in hazard prone areas in the first instance and consider remediation or mitigation if proposals have production or other recognised benefits.
5. Recognise the range of amenity values and characteristics in the rural area.

6. Consolidate rural living development in areas where productive rural land uses have already been compromised or on less productive land without significant adverse effects on the environment.
7. Provide for a range of land uses in the rural area, including residential, lifestyle, commercial, industrial and rural production.
8. Provide for co-ordinated urban development where reticulated services are provided.

RA 1.3 General Policies

1. To manage effects on rural character and amenity values, by providing for a range of rural Environments with differing expectations.
2. To ensure that the productive rural land resources are protected to enable a diverse range of productive rural land use activities by applying the Rural Production Environment.
3. To identify specific land areas as Rural Living Environment to provide for the foreseeable demand for a variety of lifestyle opportunities in the District without compromising the provision of land for future urban growth and the productive use of land.
4. To identify the Strategic Rural Environment in locations where established strategic rural industries operate to manage reverse sensitivity effects, provide sufficient provision for on-going operation and expansion as required.
5. To provide for the consolidated development of rural villages through identifying areas suitable for residential (Rural Village Residential Environment), commercial (Rural Village Centre Environment) and industrial (Rural Village Industry Environment) land uses.
6. To design new subdivision and development to avoid impacts on ecological areas including areas of native trees and vegetation, wetland and riparian areas and habitats of native species; unless measures are proposed to provide appropriate levels of mitigation.
7. To preserve cultural and heritage values by identifying features and sites and requiring development to demonstrate how any cultural and / or heritage values will be protected from any adverse effects.
8. To avoid adverse cumulative effects on the rural area by ensuring that all subdivision and land use activities are appropriately designed and serviced.
9. To limit urban expansion into the Rural Production Environment where:
 - Reticulated services, waste water, stormwater and water are provided.
 - Development is in accordance with Council adopted Structure Plans.
 - Development avoids hazard prone areas.
 - Development protects Outstanding Natural Landscapes, Indigenous Biodiversity and Heritage.
 - Development is adjacent to existing Living Environments.
 - Development provides for the extension and linking of infrastructure beyond the development site.

RA 1.4 Eligibility Rule

The following shall form the basis of assessment for resource consent application in the Rural Area, in any Environment:

- the Objectives and Policies for the Rural Area,
- the Objectives, Policies and provisions set out in the relevant rural Environment RPE, RLE, SRIE, RVRE, RVCE and RVIE Land use and Subdivision sections,
- the Resource Area provisions; and
- District Wide provisions.

RA 1.5 Notification Rules

1. Activities that are contrary to the relevant requisite policies *must be* publicly notified.
2. Activities that are not contrary to the relevant requisite policies are *precluded* from public notification.
3. Activities that are precluded from public notification may still be subject to limited notification.

District Wide Provisions:

A number of existing provisions/topics have not been addressed in the Rural Plan Change draft provisions as they are intended to be dealt with on a district-wide basis rather than at the lower policy level. The existing provisions are referred to.

Hazardous substances

Signs

Noise

Vibration

Outdoor Storage

Network utility operations

Artificial lighting

Construction noise

Electromagnetic radiation

Aerials and support structures

Resource Areas (Landscapes, Mineral Extraction including earthworks, Biodiversity etc)