

RLE.1 Rural Living Environment

RLE.1.1 Description & Expectations

The Rural Living Environment (RLE) covers rural areas within the District that are either already characterised by lifestyle activities or are desirable areas for lifestyle type development to occur. The Whangarei Rural Development Strategy 2013 acknowledges that people choose to live in the countryside for different reasons. The range of rural lifestyle activities occurring in the District can be categorised as bush living (bush blocks), hobby farming, 'going green' (off the grid, organic production, no spray areas etc), working from home, and commuters (people who want a rural lifestyle but are closely aligned with the urban environment for work, education and services).

The locations of RLE will generally be limited to contain potentially adverse effects on rural amenity and productivity, particularly those that are cumulative due to increased population being surrounded by the Rural Production Environment (RPE), and key infrastructure corridors. Impacts on the local roading network have been considered in the selection of suitable areas for the RLE and unsealed roads have been avoided due to dust nuisance and the impacts on future road maintenance and seal extensions. The RLE also aims to support rural communities and their identification has specifically considered distance to social infrastructure such as schools and rural villages. Due to the proposed location and the potential size of allotments it is considered unsustainable and uneconomic to provide the reticulation of services within the RLE. Onsite servicing of lifestyle development is common throughout the District.

Historic subdivision patterns have generally resulted in a more highly fragmented land tenure pattern than is found in the Rural Production areas. Smaller site sizes in the RLE's than in the RPE means that the RLE is characterised by more by small scale hobby farming and rural lifestyle activities. In order to achieve the best environmental outcomes it is considered necessary to reflect the existing rural lifestyle character and amenity of the identified areas through zoning that acknowledges the existing development pattern and provides for changes in future land uses as well as some limited growth where appropriate. Enabling rural living opportunities to occur on an ad hoc basis throughout the rural areas will not achieve the sustainable management of natural and physical resources because of effects such as reverse sensitivity, cumulative effects, and scattered development compromising the efficient use of the rural land resource.

In the RLE it is expected that a rural character will be retained through the careful siting of buildings and the provision of landscaping to maintain a sense of spaciousness and the continuation of some rural land use activities albeit at a smaller scale than activities such as dairy farming and forestry. A variety of land uses will be provided for including productive rural land uses, some non rural activities and lifestyle related activities. The ability to undertake non rural land use activities will be determined by the scale, nature and location of the activity. The effects of productive rural land uses will generally be limited in scale because of smaller site sizes and the requirement to comply with the environmental standards set out in the District wide provisions.

Subdivision will be limited to development that is in keeping with the existing environment in specific areas in terms of the average lot size. Lifestyle subdivision in these areas will be required to be consistent with the specified policies to ensure that the effects on the environment are acceptable.

RLE.1.2 Objectives

1. Provide for a variety of rural living opportunities whilst preserving rural character and amenity values.
2. Ensure that a variety of site sizes is provided to enable rural land use activities to occur in combination with lifestyle development options.
3. Enable the establishment of non rural activities that are of a scale, nature and character appropriate to, and compatible with the characteristics of RLEs.
4. Lifestyle options are provided which promote opportunities to pursue space-intensive hobbies, self-sufficiency or Small Scale Rural Industries, compatible with rural production activities and the sustainable function of ecosystems.
5. Reverse sensitivity effects on surrounding rural production, rural industries or key infrastructure are avoided, remedied or mitigated.
6. Growth within the RLE is managed to protect the viability of Rural Villages.

RLE.1.3 Policies

1. To maintain and protect the productive functions of the rural area, provide for a RLE in locations that:
 - Have an existing average allotment density of ??
 - Have an existing density of residential built development of ??
 - Are not identified as a hazard prone area.
 - Are not identified as Outstanding Natural Landscape or Significant Indigenous Vegetation or Habitats.
 - Are not located so as to gain direct access from an unsealed metal road.
 - Located within close proximity to community facilities.
 - Are not located within the urban environment identified in the Urban Growth Strategy.
2. To maintain and enhance rural character and amenity of the RLEs by:
 - Controlling the location and design of subdivision.
 - Ensuring that land use activities are designed, constructed and operated to be subservient to the rural values and sense of openness of these Environments.
3. To preserve rural character and amenity whilst enabling lifestyle development in the RLE and maintaining factors that contribute to the rural character including:
 - Low levels of noise and lighting, particularly at night.
 - A high degree of privacy.
 - Ample access to daylight and sunlight.
 - Generally low levels of traffic other than that associated with seasonal rural production activities.

- A range of landscapes, a sense of spaciousness, with visual connections to the wider environment.
 - Seasonal changes.
 - Informal arrangement and design of roadways and structures, subservient to natural landform patterns, and a clustering of built development.
 - Dominance of natural features including landforms, watercourses and indigenous vegetation.
 - Presence of rural production activities such as farming and associated effects such as odour, noise from machinery and livestock and buildings such as barns and silos.
3. To ensure buildings are designed and constructed to minimise the need for significant earthworks, the loss of native vegetation and / or natural habitats.
 4. To ensure that the scale and nature of new land use activities is consistent with the level of the amenity of the surrounding environment.
 5. To preserve rural character and amenity by considering the extent to which proposed land use and subdivision activities relate to the stated Expectations for the RLE.

RLE.2 LANDUSE

RPE 2.1 Eligibility Rules

1. Industrial Activities and Mineral Extraction are prohibited activities.
2. Commercial Activities are non-complying activities.
3. Any other Activity not requiring consent as a discretionary activity shall be a permitted activity.

RLE 2.2 Discretionary Activities

1. Construction or alteration of a Residential Unit:
 - a. Within 500m of a Mineral Extraction Area, Strategic Rural Industry or Business Environment.
 - b. Within 30m of a Rural Production Environment.
 - c. Within 100m of a State Highway and/or Strategic Forestry Route, and/or an unsealed metal road.
 - d. Within 30m of a production forestry.
2. Construction of more than one Principal Residential Unit.
3. Any Place of Assembly.
4. Construction or alteration of any building:
 - a. That exceeds a height equal to 3m plus the shortest horizontal distance between that part of the building and the site boundary.
 - b. That exceeds a height of 8m.
 - c. Within 10 metres from any road boundary or within 3m from any other boundary.

- d. That results in a site coverage exceeding 500m² of the net site area.
 - e. Within 27m of Mean High Water Springs, excluding bridges, culverts and Structures,.
 - f. Within 27m of the top of the bank of any river that has a width exceeding 3m, excluding bridges, culverts and Structures.
5. Impervious areas greater than 15% of the net site area.
6. Construction of Minor Residential Units:
 - a. Resulting in more than one Minor Residential Unit per site.
 - b. That has separate access/driveway from the Principal Residential Unit.
7. Establishment of any access, roading and/or parking spaces or associated facility which fails to comply with the Environmental Engineering Standards 2010.
8. Any activity generating more than 30 traffic movements per site, per day.
9. Small Scale Rural Industries that:
 - a. Produce noise or odour effects outside of site boundaries.
 - b. Offer goods for sale that are grown or produced off-site.
 - c. Have retail or industrial areas greater than 40m² in GFA.
 - d. Provide sleeping accommodation for more than 6 paying guests accommodated for a period more than one month.
 - e. In addition to the principal operator have more than two other persons engaged in the activity.
 - f. Have a total area of signage greater than 2m², per site.
 - g. Do not provide parking and vehicle manoeuvring areas on site in accordance with the EES 2010 to accommodate any visitors or workers associated with the activity.
 - h. Are located on a Strategic Transport Route, as identified in the District Plan.
 - i. Have illuminated or moving signage.
10. Small Scale Rural Industry that trigger three or more of the discretionary criteria in 9 (a)-(i) above are to be considered as non complying activities.
11. Any activity that will damage, modify, or remove any heritage building, site or object, stone wall or cultural Site or Area of Significance identified in the District Plan.

REL.2.3 Requisite Policies

1. To protect rural character and amenity by preventing the operation of Commercial and Industrial Activities.
2. To protect rural character and amenity, avoid adverse and cumulative affects to the road network by limiting the number of traffic movements generated by an activity to 30 per day.

REL.2.4 General Policies

1. To require hydrological neutrality with respect to stormwater and to ensure that wastewater systems are designed utilizing the best practicable option for the site characteristics.
2. To maintain and enhance rural character and amenity values by limiting the establishment of activities that generate high levels of traffic movements or traffic movements that are of a nature that is incompatible with the character of the RLE.
3. To manage reverse sensitivity effects by avoiding the establishment of habitable buildings within close proximity to Mineral Extraction Activities, Rural Production, Business and Strategic Rural Industry Environments.
4. To maintain rural amenity, privacy, open space and rural character by ensuring that all new buildings and rural land uses:
 - a. Are of a scale and character appropriate to the Rural Living Environment; and
 - b. Are sited in a location sufficiently setback from site boundaries to enable privacy, the retention of open space and access to sunlight;
 - c. Avoid adverse effects in terms of ecological values, water quality, versatile soils, open space character, heritage values or landform.

RLE.3 SUBDIVISION

RLE 3.1 Eligibility

1. Subdivision of a minor residential unit from a residential unit is a prohibited activity.
2. Any other subdivision proposals shall be considered as a discretionary activity.

RLE.3.2 Controlled Activities

1. Subdivision where the average size of the proposed allotments is not less 2ha.
2. Subdivision where the size of proposed allotments are not less than the minimum allotment size of 4000m².
3. Subdivision where allotments:
 - a. Are not provided with a connection to an electrical supply system at the boundary of the site.
 - b. Result in more than 8 allotments having shared access to the road.
 - c. Do not have the ability to accommodate a 100m² buildable area free of hazards.
 - d. Do not demonstrate that management of stormwater and wastewater can be accommodated within the proposed allotments in accordance with the Whangarei District Council Environmental Engineering Standards 2010.

RLE. 3.3 General Policies

1. To avoid adverse effects on the sustainable provision of infrastructure by ensuring that all subdivision undertakes necessary physical works in accordance with the Whangarei District Council Environmental Engineering Standards 2010.
2. To manage the effects of stormwater runoff by utilizing the principles of low impact design and ensuring that additional stormwater flows arising from the proposed development are managed so that they will be hydrologically neutral.
3. To manage the effects of wastewater discharge by requiring site specific design and any other evidence and / or mitigation measures necessary to demonstrate that the effects of wastewater discharge can be adequately addressed.
4. To design subdivision and locate associated land development to avoid urban form and character; maintain and enhance rural character, amenity values and protect and enhance environmental features by:
 - Designing subdivisions to respond to the topography and characteristics of the land being developed
 - Requiring sites to meet a minimum as well as an average allotment size across the development so that development results in non-uniform urban patterns that respond to the features of the environment in which they are located.
 - Identifying building platforms that respond to site topography and environmental characteristics.
 - Locating access ways, services, utilities and building platforms where these can be provided without the need for significant earthworks, retaining, benching or site contouring.
 - Locating access ways, services, utilities and building platforms where the location is sensitive to, and responds to environmental features of the site.