

As a general overview the Whangarei economy is significantly benefited from horticultural revenues with 60 growers of kiwifruit producing over 1.5 million trays getting \$10m, 200 growers of avocados getting \$21m. There are also significant activities in orchid growing, berry fruit and Tamarillos. A reasonable economic benefit of horticulture to Whangarei is over \$250m.

I am a ratepayer and wish to submit on proposed plan change 85 and associated issues:

RPE 1.1 refers to rural production activities as dairy farming, horticulture and forestry.

The general definitions state

Farming "means any agricultural or horticultural activity having as its primary purpose the commercial production of any livestock or vegetative matter for human or animal consumption. The production of livestock or vegetative matter utilises the in situ production capacity of the soil, water and air as a medium for production. Farming includes: (a) all types of livestock breeding, cropping, grazing, aquaculture (b) horticulture, including covered cropping as in greenhouses (c) apiaries (d) normal rural practices including associated buildings and structures (e) crop support structures and artificial crop protection (f) airstrips. But excludes: (a) Plantation forestry and intensive livestock farming."

Decision sought: However throughout the document there are separate references to farming, horticulture and intensive farming either they are all farming and should be referred to as such or the definitions need to be changed.

RPE 1 Rural Production environment 7.b, c, h

The references to seasonal activity, low intensity of development, and low traffic levels are not representative of the existing environment and appear to be an attempt to redefine the existing activities. In Whangarei there are horticultural activities, kiwifruit, avocados, orchids, berry fruit growing that all have activities throughout the year, in certain cases have a reasonable intensity of buildings and have traffic activity throughout the year.

Decision sought: These descriptions need to be changed.

RPE 1 Rural Production environment 8

Rural Production environment 8 excludes intensive farming but we already have intensive farming in the district and the likelihood is that market demands will increase the level of covered growing to be undertaken in the future. If Whangarei Council is to have a forward looking document it needs to account for the future directions likely to be undertaken by land use and the exclusion of intensive farming (which is not defined in the definitions) clearly ignores the potential future direction of horticulture in the district.

Decision sought: Intensive farming assuming that includes horticulture, covered cropping and flower production should not be excluded

RPE 1 Rural Productive environment 10

Creation of a 20hectare minimum title zone. This approach is not representative of the current environment with numerous smaller titles already in existence. Clearly it is an attempt to rewrite history so the environment fits some planning objective. The plan needs to start with what actually exists and deal with that in a realistic and appropriate manner. Because of the definition in clause 8 excludes intensive farming this plan change effectively limits any further intensive farming/horticultural developments to a minimum 20 hectare size will lose potential development

EVIDENCE 31
TOPIC PC85A-D, 86A-B, 87, 102, 114
SUB# Rural Plan Changes
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opportunities for Whangarei and potential lose the creation of significant employment opportunities.

RPE 1 Rural Productive environment 12

The wording used here ignores the fact that this is a productive environment and needs to be able to adapt and use best practice to remain economic to impose a need to protect a "townie" view of what is rural character and amenity value is in effect placing an economic restraint on this sector which is a significant contributor to the local economy.

Decision sought: The wording needs to be substantially changed to reflect this is a productive environment delivering economics wealth to the district and should not be restricted by efficiently contributing to the local economy.

RPE 2.1 Landuse – Eligibility rules

Clauses 4 and 5 do not reflect the current environment. In particular to limit packing and processing of plant material be it orchids, kiwifruit, berryfruit or tamarillos to an indoor/outdoor area no greater than 500sq m is very restrictive.

Decision sought: This needs considerable rethought and redrafting to reflect the economic requirements of the productive environment.

The definition used by council of ancilliary activities is set out below:

Activities Ancillary to Farming or Forestry "means processing and packaging facilities for farming, forestry and any rural industry that is dependent primarily on the direct handling of raw produce, or that primarily supplies services to farming, horticulture or forestry. Includes premises used for the manufacture of dairy products, abattoirs, timber processing, stock yards and sale yards, cool stores and pack houses and rural contractor depots."

Decision sought: The definition should be changed to exclude owner operator packing operations

RPE2.3 Landuse - Discretionary activities

A discretionary activity is defined in d as having a pack house or horticultural facility (1.d.ii) within 250m of the nearest house on a separate title. This is ridiculous given the size of some horticultural blocks and will prevent economic development in the region.

The plan seeks to make any building site coverage limited to 20% and not within 8m of the boundary. As Whangarei Council appears to have an extremely wide interpretation of what is a building, certainly more than most other councils including the Far North. This restriction is neither practical nor appropriate, it could affect under Whangarei Council interpretations artificial shelter, as well as plant protection covered structures.

The plan should be changed so that artificial shelter and any plant covering structure should be excluded from this discretionary limitation.

Decision sought: The definition of buildings in the operative plan should be changed to exclude artificial crop protection structures, artificial shelter and crop support structures.

Consequential Amendments

New policy

The Plan Change is proposing that a consequential amendment to the Operative Plan is to delete Policy 6.4.10 Productive Soils.

There is no policy that brings across the concept of Policy 6.4.10. Horticulture NZ seeks that either Policy 6.4.10 is retained or included in RA.1.3.

The policy includes the identification and protection of the district's highly productive and versatile soils for their productive capacity and to recognise their value to the district given the pressure on those soils for future growth. These issues are still very relevant, if not more so. While the RPS identifies some classes of versatile land as important there are also areas of highly productive land outside of Classes I- III that need to be identified and protected from encroachment from urban and rural residential development.

Decision sought: Include a new policy in RA.1.3 To recognise and identify the district's highly productive and versatile land for its productive capacity and the value to the district's economy and to protect from urban and rural residential development.

Noise and Vibration

The Consequential amendments seek to amend the recently operative Noise and Vibration provisions in the Operative Plan to align with the new rural environments. A key consideration in these changes is what level of amenity should apply in the Rural Living Environment as there is no equivalent zone within the operative Plan. The areas that make up the Rural Living Environment are currently in the Countryside Environment and are included within the Rural Area framework of the Plan. Therefore while there is a cross over between 'rural' and 'living' Horticulture NZ considers that they are still part of the Rural Area and rural production activities are still undertaken within the zone. The same measure of the notional boundary applies to both Rural Production and Rural Living. The exemption for mobile machinery for agricultural or horticultural activities applies in both the Rural Production and Rural Living Environments. Therefore the appropriate amenity for the Rural Living Environment is that which pertains to the rural area. This is particularly important given that there are significant areas of horticulture production within the Rural Living Environment.

Decision sought: Amend the NAV provisions to ensure that noise levels in the Rural Living Environment are the same as the Rural Production Environment

NAV 6.11 Bird scaring devices

NAV.6.11 permits the use of bird scaring devices. The operative Plan provides for the permitted use in the Countryside or the Coastal Countryside Environments. However the consequential amendments seek to only provide for permitted activity use of bird scarers in the Rural Production Environment. As stated above the Rural Living Environment is more akin to the Rural Production Environment and so the use of bird scarers should align with the provisions for the Rural Production Environment. 27

Decision sought: Amend NAV.6.11 to add Rural Living Environment after Rural Production Environment

NAV 6.13 Frost fans

NAV.6.13 permits the use of frost fans. The operative Plan provides for the permitted use in the Countryside or the Coastal Countryside Environments. However the consequential amendments seek to only provide for permitted activity use of bird scarers in the Rural Production Environment. As stated above the Rural Living Environment is more akin to the Rural Production Environment and so the use of frost fans should align with the provisions for the Rural Production Environment.

Decision sought: Amend NAV.6.13 to add Rural Living Environment after Rural Production Environment