

16 Landscape

16.1 Significant Issues

The effects of inappropriate subdivision, use and development on the natural character of the coastal environment, indigenous wetlands, lakes and their margins.

The sensitivity of outstanding natural features, geological sites and landscapes to the adverse effects of inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

The effects of inappropriate subdivision, use and development on the amenity and cultural values of natural features, geological sites and landscapes.

The conflict between private land use and the protection of landscapes for the benefit of the community.

The effects of subdivision and development on landscapes significant to Maori and their culture and traditions, with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu and other taonga.

16.2 Overview

Landforms, the coast, rivers and wetlands, and the vegetation that grows on the land's surface, ranging from naturally occurring bush to cultivated pasture, combine to form a variety of landscapes. These are further defined by the way buildings, roads and other structures are set amongst them. The varied combinations of natural and built features provide a complexity that further characterises landscapes.

The strong imagery of the enclosing Western Hills, bush clad hill country, volcanic cones, extensive farmed flats, the fluent course of rivers and streams, and the influence of pockets of indigenous vegetation, create a varied and interesting landscape. Regard needs to be given to ensuring development is sensitive to the particular landscape characteristics of the District. The rural production areas of Whangarei District will continue to evolve as farming, horticulture and forestry practices change. This change and diversity of activity in the rural production areas is necessary for the social and economic well-being of the District. Such change and diversity can contribute positively or negatively to the character and quality of the rural landscape.

The diverse range of coastal landscapes is one of the strongest aspects of the District's identity. The expansive view of the Bream Bay shore and Whangarei Heads backdrop that greets those entering the District over the Brynderwyn Hills, is a particularly striking visual introduction. Pressures related to the coastline are more explicit than in most other areas. Catering for the needs of recreational users, and mounting demands for residential and lifestyle block subdivisions, places considerable strain upon remaining natural areas of the coast.

The Resource Management Act 1991 requires Councils to preserve the natural character of the coastal environment, and to protect outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development (sections 6(a) and (b)). Councils are also required to have particular regard to the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values (section 7(c)).

16.3 Objectives

16.3.1

The preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment.

16.3.2

The protection of outstanding landscapes and natural features, including geological sites from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

16.3.3

The amenity values of the District's outstanding natural features and landscapes, including geological sites are maintained and, where practicable, enhanced.

Explanation and Reasons: The distinctive identity of the District is derived from its natural features, geological sites and landscapes, including the coastal environment. Subdivision, use and development must avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on these features, sites and landscapes.

16.3.4

The preservation of natural features significant to Maori and their culture and traditions, with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu and other taonga.

16.4 Policies

16.4.1 Outstanding Landscapes

Landscapes having a sensitivity rating of 7, using the criteria in Schedule 16A, are regarded as 'outstanding' and should be protected against inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

Explanation and Reasons: Section 6 of the Resource Management Act 1991 requires the Plan to recognise and provide for the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes. The Council has identified Outstanding Landscape Areas, the criteria for which are explained fully in the Whangarei District Landscape Assessment Report (LA4 Landscape Architects, 1995). The criteria are reproduced in Schedule 16A. The Council intends to undertake a review of the Whangarei District Landscape Assessment and incorporate the findings of that review into the District Plan by way of a Plan Change, once the Plan is operative. This Plan Change may result in a change to the criteria for assessing landscapes and the sensitivity rating used to classify individual landscapes.

16.4.2 Outstanding Natural Features

To protect Outstanding Natural Features, including Geological Sites identified in Schedule 16B from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

Explanation and Reasons: Section 6 of the Resource Management Act 1991 requires the Plan to recognise and provide for the protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes. This policy states that outstanding natural

features identified in the Whangarei District Landscape Assessment Report (LA4 Landscape Architects, 1995); or a volcanic cone; or identified by the Department of Conservation in their list Priority Geological Sites and Land Forms for Protection; or as having a vulnerability of 1 or 2 in the Inventory and Maps of Important Geological Sites and Landforms in the Northland Region (edited by Jill A. Kenny and Bruce W. Hayward 1996), will be considered to be 'outstanding' in the District. The Outstanding Natural Features including Geological Sites identified are shown on the Planning Maps.

16.4.3 Notable Landscapes

Landscapes having a sensitivity rating of 6 are regarded as 'notable' and should be protected against inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

Explanation and Reasons: Landscapes that are ranked 6 under the landscape criteria, explained fully in the Whangarei District Landscape Assessment Report (LA4 Landscape Architects, 1995), will be considered to be 'notable' in the District. The Notable Landscapes identified are shown on the Planning Maps. The Council intends to undertake a review of the Whangarei District Landscape Assessment and incorporate the findings of that review into the District Plan by way of a Plan Change, once the Plan is operative. This Plan Change may result in a change to the criteria for assessing landscapes and the sensitivity ratings used to classify individual landscapes.

16.4.4 Natural Character

To ensure that subdivision, use and development does not adversely affect the natural character of the coastal environment (particularly coastal headlands and promontories), and lakes and rivers and their margins.

Explanation and Reasons: Subdivision and subsequent insensitive use and development can have a significant adverse effect on coastal landscape values. The various types of coastal landform are all sensitive to forms of development. For example, estuaries, because of their predominantly horizontal landscape elements, are particularly sensitive to the visual effects of vertical structures such as transmission lines. This policy aims to manage subdivision, use and development so that these adverse effects are avoided. Coastal headlands and promontories, like ridges, are sensitive to the visual effects of structures.

16.4.5 Subdivision

To ensure that subdivision of land in Outstanding Landscape Areas, or land containing Outstanding Natural Features or Geological Sites is of a scale, design and location that maintains and protects the landscape values and natural character of the environment.

Explanation and Reasons: Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes, and Geological Sites have been identified in both inland and coastal areas of the District. Proposed subdivision and development in these areas will be required to have regard to the key elements, patterns and character that contribute to their significance. Subdivision activities, while not a direct use of land, will involve the identification of access, building platforms and other land development works, which may have significant impact on identified landscape areas. The design and density of subdivision in these areas will therefore be controlled.

16.4.6 Buildings and Structures

To ensure that buildings and structures are of a scale, design and location that, where possible, avoids adverse visual effects on landscape character and values, and otherwise mitigates such adverse effects to the maximum extent practicable.

Explanation and Reasons: Large buildings and structures can have a considerable impact on the appearance of different environments including valued natural features and landscapes and is of particular concern to residents. Encroachment above ridgelines has the potential to be especially visible. This policy seeks to manage visual impacts on the landscape character of the surrounding environment. Impacts on landscape may be highest within Living, Countryside and Coastal Countryside Environments, and lowest in Business Environments.

16.4.7 Ridgelines

To ensure that buildings and structures within Outstanding and Notable Landscapes avoid locating upon, or intruding above, ridgelines, where this results in adverse visual effects which cannot be mitigated or remedied, or unless there is a functional need for location on the ridgeline.

Explanation and Reasons: The intrusion of structures onto valued natural features and landscapes is of particular concern to residents. Encroachment above ridgelines has the potential to be especially visible. This policy manages the placement of structures, with a particular emphasis on protecting ridgelines within areas recognised for their outstanding landscape value.

16.4.8 Roads

To ensure that roads and vehicle accesses are aligned and formed in such a way that they do not disrupt the visual coherence of:

- outstanding natural features and landscapes;
- notable landscapes;
- coastal landscapes;
- landscapes which are visible from state highways.

Explanation and Reasons: It is recognised that access to and within the District is important for farming, forestry, tourism, inter-regional travel and local convenience. However, the visual effect of “cut and batter” faces of roads and driveways can be very noticeable within certain landscapes. Many of these visual effects can be addressed by carefully designing and forming roads to fit into the landscape of a particular locality, for example, by aligning roads and vehicle accesses with the contours and by minimising earthworks and rehabilitating exposed surfaces. It is acknowledged that topographical and other constraints may mean that this will not always be practicable.

16.4.9 Earthworks

To ensure that adverse visual effects of earthworks scarps on outstanding natural features and landscapes are avoided and that the adverse visual effects on notable landscapes, coastal landscapes and other landscapes are avoided, remedied or mitigated far as practicable, by encouraging re-vegetation of earthworks scarps.

16.4.10 Indigenous Vegetation

To protect indigenous vegetation, which contributes to the character and visual quality of landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

Explanation and Reasons: Whangarei District has large areas of remnant native forest and shrubland, which have habitat value and contribute to the visual character and sense of place of the rural and coastal landscapes. Subdivision and other land development works can result in the removal of large areas of indigenous vegetation from rural and coastal landscapes. This policy aims to protect the natural character and visual amenity of these landscapes by including in the Plan, indigenous vegetation rules, which limit the amount of vegetation clearance that can be undertaken within these landscapes. The retention of indigenous vegetation can contribute positively to the visual quality of a subdivision and/or development and minimise adverse effects on the landscape.

It is acknowledged that normal forestry and farming operations sometimes require the clearance of indigenous vegetation. This policy aims to minimise vegetation clearance by productive rural land uses by encouraging adoption of best practice during harvesting and production.

16.4.11 Rehabilitation

To encourage the rehabilitation of landscapes ensuring the remediation of the adverse effects of inappropriate land use activities. Development proposals that provide for the enhancement and rehabilitation of previously compromised landscapes may receive recognition for the positive effects provided.

Explanation and Reasons: Past land use practices have resulted in some parts of the landscape being degraded through erosion and loss of amenity values. This Plan seeks to ensure that the enhancement and rehabilitation of previously compromised landscapes becomes a recognised part of normal subdivision and development process. To encourage this, it may be appropriate to give some credit to development or subdivision proposals, which for example, provide for the protection and replanting of areas of indigenous vegetation.

16.4.12

To identify for protection and, where possible, enhance natural features that are significant to Maori and their culture and traditions, with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu and other taonga and to ensure that these natural features are not adversely affected by inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

16.5 Methods

16.5.1 Regulatory Methods

- Identification of Outstanding Landscape Areas, Outstanding Natural Features and Notable Landscape Areas on the Planning Maps (Policies 16.4.1 to 16.4.3).
- Resource Area rules regulating siting, earthworks, indigenous vegetation clearance and design of buildings and structures in identified landscape areas (Policies 16.4.4 to 16.4.11).

- Environment rules relating to subdivision and the intensity of development (Policies 16.4.4 to 16.4.11).
- Resource consent conditions (Policies 16.4.1 to 16.4.11).
- Undertake a review of the Whangarei District Landscape Assessment Report (LA4 Landscape Architects, 1995), and incorporate the findings of this review into the Plan by way of a Plan Change as soon as practicable.

16.5.2 Other Plans and Legislation

- The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement (Policies 16.4.1 to 16.4.11).
- The Regional Policy Statement for Northland (Policies 16.4.1 to 16.4.11).
- The Northland Regional Water and Soil Plan (Policies 16.4.1 to 16.4.11).
- Iwi/hapu Environment Management Plans.

16.5.3 Information, Education and Advocacy

- Liaison with the Northland Regional Council (Policies 16.4.1 to 16.4.11).
- Liaison with the Department of Conservation (Policies 16.4.1 to 16.4.11).
- Liaison with iwi/hapu in relation to landscape issues of concern to tangata whenua (Policies 16.4.1 to 16.4.11).
- Educate and inform resource users about the landscape areas of the District (Policies 16.4.1 to 16.4.11).
- Provide guidelines on harmonious development in landscape areas. (Policies 16.4.1 to 16.4.11).

16.6 Anticipated Environmental Results

The following results are expected to be achieved by the foregoing Objectives, Policies and Methods. The means of monitoring whether the Plan achieves the expected outcomes are set out in the Whangarei District Council Monitoring Strateg.

- The identification and protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.
- The maintenance and/or enhancement of coastal landscapes, particularly headlands, promontories, ridgelines, estuaries and areas of indigenous vegetation and habitat.
- The identification and protection and/or enhancement of historic and cultural landscapes, including landscapes valued by tangata whenua.

Schedule 16A - Criteria for Assessing Landscapes

S16A.1 Part 1 Value Attached to the Landscape

Aesthetic Value

Field evaluation of Aesthetic Value using the following criteria (with individual ratings):

- **Vividness**

How immediately impressive and memorable is the landscape as a result of its visual distinctiveness, diversity or other factors (both compositional and geophysical)?

- **Complexity/Diversity**

To what extent does the unit have a sense of richness and interest about it, arising from the diversity of elements found within it - without that diversity leading to discontinuity?

- **Cohesion**

Is there a continuity of key statements/patterns/themes/accents that give the landscape both character and a sense of unity?

- **Legibility**

To what extent is it possible to develop a clear mental image of the unit's landscape due to:

the clear definition of features and patterns within it that emphasises its three dimensional structure (layering); and identifiable landmarks (points of focus and reference)?

- **Mystery**

Does the landscape's spatial structure and array of elements promote a sense of sequence and 'enticement' through the unit's space: the promise of 'more to unfold around the next bend' - just beyond the landscape that is immediately visible?

Heritage Value

To what extent does the unit reveal and convey a distinctive sense of identity because of:

- **Endemic Associations**

Arising from natural elements in the landscape that contribute to the character and sense of place of the locality and region; and

- **Cultural Associations**

Arising from man-made landscape elements that are distinctive and valued because of their association with both Maori and Pakeha cultures, e.g. old pa sites, historic buildings?

Rarity

To what extent is the unit, or key elements within it, rare or even unique, at the regional level?

S16A.2 Part 2 Vulnerability to Change**Visual Absorption Capacity**

Field evaluation of Visual Absorption Capacity using the following criteria to determine the capacity of the unit to visually absorb change without significant modification of its character:

- **Land Uses**
How 'developed' is the existing landscape - (from areas that are primarily native and natural to those which are highly developed and urbanised)?
- **Vegetation Cover and Type**
How extensive and varied is existing vegetation cover (from no cover and monocultural dominance to a high level of vegetated cover and diverse species)?
- **Topographical Type & Diversity**
Does the unit's terrain assist or limit viewing because of its character and the viewing angles that would typically arise between vantage areas and locations subject to modification - (from the simplicity and openness of a plain or shallow ridgeline to incised foot hills with a high level of visual containment)?
- **Exposure/Visibility**
How visually exposed is the unit/sub-unit/view to views of:
 - Residential areas;
 - Areas of recreational use and tourism activity;
 - Public transport routes and tourist routes; and
 - Commercial areas?

S16A.3 Overall Sensitivity Class

This is derived from the value and vulnerability ratings - with an indication of over-riding factors where the final rating is not the average of those for value and vulnerability.

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|---|--------------------------|
| 7 | Extreme Sensitivity; |
| 6 | High Sensitivity; |
| 5 | Significant Sensitivity; |
| 4 | Moderate Sensitivity; |
| 3 | Limited Sensitivity; |
| 2 | Low Sensitivity; |
| 1 | No/Very Low Sensitivity. |

Schedule 16B - Outstanding Natural Features including Geological Sites

A number of individual elements, such as prominent volcanic cones, have been identified as being Outstanding Natural Features by the Whangarei District Landscape Assessment and the Inventory of Important Geological Sites. Such elements are only identified when they do not fall within an Outstanding Landscape Area or they have a vulnerability rating of 1 or 2. Otherwise, where Outstanding Natural Features are included within a wider Outstanding Landscape Area, for example Mount Manaia, they have not been included in this list.

For a full list of the Outstanding Natural Features including Geological Sites, refer to Appendix 13.

Revision and Sign-off Sheet

Date Approved	Editor	Paragraph	Change Reference	Decision Date	Approved By
17 December 2009	FP	16.4.6	Correction of tense in second sentence 'Encroachment..has..the potential'.		PW

Editor**France Prevost (FP)****Editor Position**

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