

Rural Development Strategy

Rural Settlements and Urban Design: Issues and Options

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1 Introduction

The urban landscape of Whangarei District consists of the city, its surrounding suburbs, and a few suburban and rural settlements. With the exception of Hikurangi and Waipu, the majority of suburban settlements are located along the coast or harbour (e.g. Ruakaka, Ngunguru, Parua Bay).

The rural settlements are mainly located inland, to the west of the city and suburban settlements.

Figure 1 shows where the rural settlements are located in relation to the larger suburban settlements identified in the Whangarei District Growth Strategy 2010 for future development.

The largest among the rural settlements are the villages of Maungakaramea and Maungatapere. The smaller hamlets include Poroti, Titoki, Waitotira, Mangapai, Matarau, Pipiwai, Ruatangata, and Marua.

This report has been prepared to provide background information for the Rural Development Strategy on the aspect of rural settlements and urban design in rural Whangarei.

The report seeks to achieve two objectives, namely (1) to determine the role of rural settlements in Whangarei and (2) to determine how the principles of urban design might address key issues that affect the current state and future direction of rural settlements in Whangarei District.

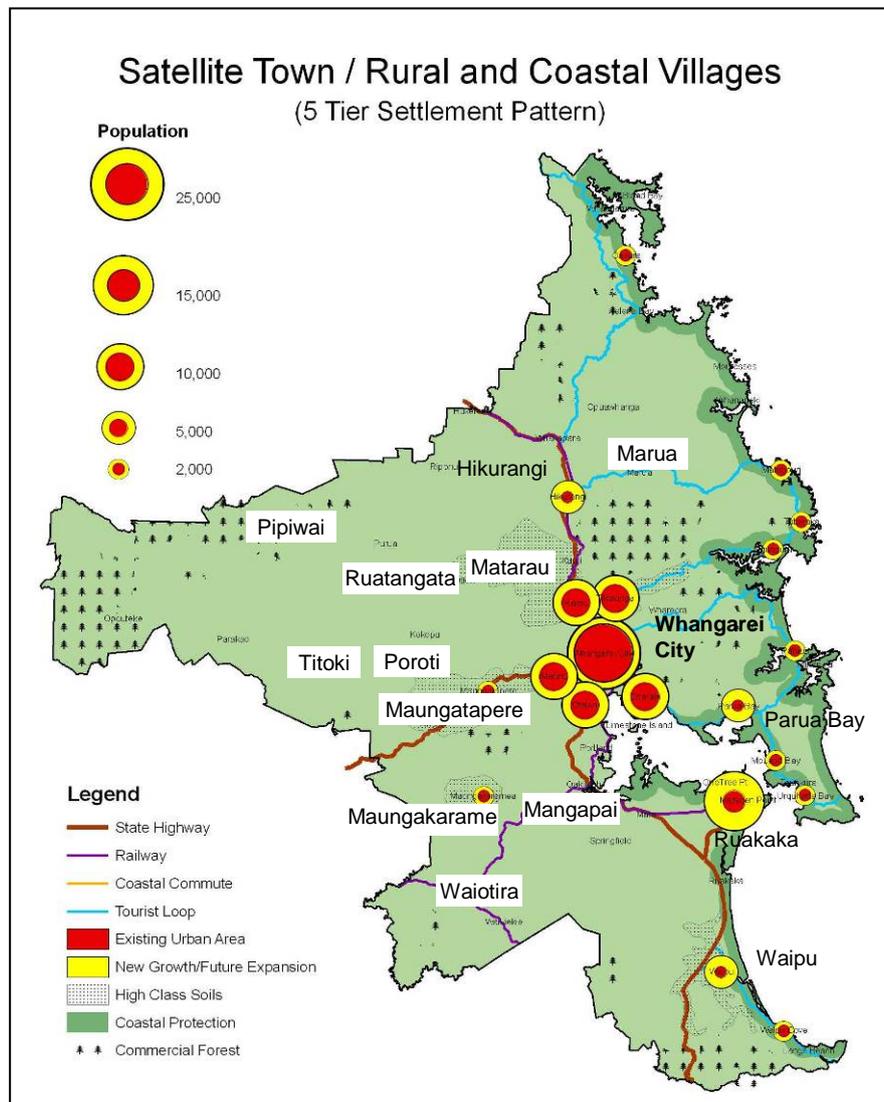


Figure 1. Future Development Path – Growth Strategy 30/50
Source: Whangarei District Growth Strategy 2010

1.1 Rural Settlements

‘Rural settlements’ refers to any form and scale of communities and localities within areas identified as rural.

In Whangarei, these settlements comprise of two larger villages (Maungakaramea and Maungatapere) and many smaller hamlets. Rural villages have the potential to grow into satellite urban communities, due to either their strategic location or the presence of important businesses and services. Several hamlets are located next to the Auckland Rail Line and have rich historic heritage (e.g. Mangapai and Waitotira). These hamlets are however of smaller scale and unlikely to develop in the short and medium term due to the absence of important businesses, services, and necessary infrastructure.

The distinguishing characteristic of rural settlements in Whangarei is their smaller and relatively constant population compared to other larger settlements. Other typical characteristics of rural settlements include:

- The presence of mixed use activities with no planned separation of activities
- Historically, these are rural service centres except for a few that were developed for housing development
- Development within their urban boundaries tends to be relatively dispersed

- They tend to locate along major arterial routes
- There have been no significant building activities in recent years
- They have high proportion of facilities important to the rural community (e.g. schools, community halls, churches, sporting domains) and not to the rural economy.

The rural villages and hamlets make an important contribution to the residential needs as well as social and economic wellbeing of the rural population. They provide residents with pleasant environment and sometimes low cost housing as an alternative to the urban living environment offered by larger settlements. Inherent to the rural settlements are the services, facilities, and amenities they offer and that local residents, visitors, and neighbouring rural communities, value highly for convenience, recreation, and employment opportunities.

While rural settlements are generally of small scale and low intensity, they are individually unique in historical character and form. They portray special intrinsic values to the rural environment through their distinctive architectural and landscape character, articulation of a sense of place, demonstration of community spirit, and preservation of their founding nature.

Certain principles of urban design can be used to help preserve the intrinsic value of rural villages and hamlets. If the purpose or role identified for specific rural settlements in the Whangarei District Growth Strategy 2010 is to accommodate growth (e.g. Maungatapere, Maungakaramea), urban design principles can help increase the growth potential of these rural settlements, while contributing to the sustainable management of the environment.

1.2 Urban Design

Urban design is the art and process of making places function, feel, and look better for people to live, work, and play in and, generally, for towns and cities to succeed economically, environmentally, and socially. Although urban design, as a policy instrument, is mainly adopted for use in larger urban settlements, certain principles of urban design, such as multiple and adaptable uses, walkability, sense of place, place management, integration and context, connectivity, legibility and way-finding, animation, function and fit, are also important in rural settlement planning.

Incorporating urban design principles in rural settlement planning can help enhance the uniqueness, pride, and security of the rural community. It can help increase efficiency in the use of rural land and in the provision of infrastructure services, by encouraging people to live in the villages and hamlets, and reducing impacts on the rural fields.

Whangarei District Council is a signatory to the New Zealand Urban Design Protocol and has committed to promote the practice of high quality urban design throughout the District. The Urban Design Strategy 2011 was formulated to increase public awareness on the merits of high quality urban design and to provide a framework for incorporating urban design in future design guides, strategic and statutory plans, and development proposals. The Strategy aims to re-establish Whangarei as a meeting place and destination by making its built environment compact, connected, distinctive, diverse, attractive, appropriate, sustainable, and safe for locals and visitors to live, work, and play, now and in the future.

This report will reference the Urban Design Strategy in putting relevant urban design elements forward to the Rural Development Strategy.

2 Policy Framework

2.1 National Level

The Resource Management Act, Urban Design Protocol, urban design case law, the Local Government Act, Reserves Act, and the Historic Places Act, provide the national framework for incorporating urban design in the sustainable management and development of our rural settlements. These are discussed more fully below:

2.1.1 The Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)

There is limited recognition of the urban environment in the RMA and less so on urban design. The Ministry for the Environment (MFE) has initiated three policy instruments to help address this gap in urban planning and to provide for increased consideration of urban design. These instruments are the Urban Design Protocol, the proposed NPS on Urban Design, and the 2009 amendments to the Act. The Protocol will be discussed in the section that follows.

In August 2008, the MFE sought public views on the scope of the NPS on Urban Design. This attracted 120 submissions. Later in April 2009, the government commenced the second phase of the resource management reforms that included a work stream focusing on urban planning issues. As part of these reforms, a discussion document entitled “*Building Competitive Cities: Reform of the urban and infrastructure planning system*,” focusing on issues with urban and infrastructure planning, was released for public feedback in late 2010.

As this work will determine new approaches to planning and design of towns and cities, the government has determined not to pursue the development of the NPS on Urban Design.

2.1.2 Urban Design Protocol

In March 2005, the MFE launched the New Zealand Urban Design Protocol to make our towns and cities more successful economically through urban design. The protocol identifies the following seven essential design qualities that are important to the development of urban areas:

Context	Seeing that buildings, places and spaces are part of the whole town or city
Character	Reflecting and enhancing the distinctive character, heritage and identity of our urban environment
Choice	Ensuring diversity and choice for people
Connections	Enhancing how different networks link together for people
Creativity	Encouraging innovative and imaginative solutions
Custodianship	Ensuring design is environmentally sustainable, safe and healthy
Collaboration	Communicating and sharing knowledge across sectors, professions and with communities.

Although these principles are intentionally applied in the context of larger urban areas, they also provide the design framework for planning rural settlements. For example, context can be taken as a principle to help integrate all the elements of a rural settlement.

There are now 180 signatories to the Protocol, including Whangarei District Council. In support, the MFE has consistently released a number of publications and programmes to help signatories champion the use of urban design in their organisation and projects. The Protocol and MFE’s publications have helped pave the way for the inclusion of urban design provisions in district plans (e.g., Wellington City Council) and the development of structure plans for towns and cities, including those that have not ratified the Protocol (e.g. New Plymouth, Rotorua). The urban design framework, which takes a design-led approach to planning, is gradually taking over the role of structural plans in New Zealand planning (e.g. Rotorua, Palmerston North).

2.1.3 Urban Design Case Law

MFE released the Urban Design Case Law Review in November 2008 to demonstrate how specific areas of the RMA and related case law can be used to address a range of issues.

Of particular interest is the noticeable trend on the incorporation of structure plans into district plans by way of plan change. Although not recognised specifically in the RMA, structure plans are now regularly considered by the Court as a valid technique for enabling an integrated plan to be developed for a particular area. Note that urban design seeks to achieve integration in terms of street layouts, open space networks, density variations, and storm water management, with added consideration of sense of place and aesthetics which are relatively absent in the RMA framework. Despite the benefits of integration offered by structure plans, the Review suggests that councils should incorporate strong urban design provisions in their district plans to help the Court resolve urban design issues and not rely on Part 2 of the RMA for broad guidance and on expert evidence for detailed guidance.

The Review suggests that although urban design is by nature integrative, it should be considered in RMA planning through the following subject areas in the RMA that are also embraced by urban design.:

Amenity	Amenity provides a catch-all and broad meaning for a range of attributes, including the physical, functional, cultural and spiritual characteristics of a place (<i>Eldamos Investments Ltd and Gladiator Investments (Gisborne) Ltd v Gisborne District Council and Intercontinental Hotel and Others v Wellington Regional Council and Waterfront Investments Ltd</i>). The Court encourages councils to provide firm and adequate provisions for these attributes in their plans (<i>Foot v Wellington City Council; Pick v Far North District Council and Intercontinental Hotel and Others v Wellington Regional Council and Waterfront Investments Ltd</i>).
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- Character** Character is a specific attribute for amenity (visual) and is recognised in the case law in various ways, including heritage, landscape, streetscape, and activities. The Court has a strong level of understanding about the importance and composition of character (*Howick Ratepayers and Residents Association Inc v Manukau City Council*).
- Heritage** Historic heritage has been elevated to a matter of national importance in the 2003 amendments. The review indicates that, following this amendment, “the Court will now give full weight to heritage values even if those values are not specifically protected by a district plan” (p. 12). Further, “where heritage values exist and this is reflected in policy, recognition should be backed up by methods in the district plan” (p. 13).
- Density** Although the Review focuses on density at a larger urban scale, a few cases apply to rural settlements planning, particularly when they affect amenity, character, and aesthetic values. For example, the Court found that the overall form was maintained as of right by a site-specific development that is higher than the district plan allows for (*Duxton Hotel Wellington v Wellington City Council*). The Court also recognised the use of structural plans and design criteria to manage density (*Canterbury Regional Council v Christchurch City Council*), to preserve open space values (*Mitchell v Waitakere City Council*), and to determine the effect of tall developments on aesthetics (*Urban Auckland v Auckland City Council*).
- Movement** Good urban design provides choice in the ways people (and their goods) move to and from their chosen destination, to commute for business or recreational purposes, or to walk for the enjoyment of simply ‘going out for a walk.’ The Court has recognised pedestrian amenity as being important relative to other considerations (*Intercontinental Hotel and Others v Wellington Regional Council and Waterfront Investments Ltd*).
- Commerce** Urban design allows for mixed-use activities occurring in urban areas to encourage people to work and play within the places they live. Of particular interest to rural settlement planning is the emerging policy on enabling mixed use over time. The Court has allowed a residential activity to temporarily inhabit an area earmarked for future commercial usage, until such time that sufficient growth is able to support it being used for commercial purposes (*Canterbury Regional Council v Waimakariri District Council*).
- Urban growth** Urban growth commonly occurs on the rural periphery of urban areas where land is cheaper. It is a phenomenon not particularly applicable at present to Whangarei’s rural settlements due to their isolated location. It will be an issue in the future particularly when more subdivisions will be developed in the urban fringe (e.g. Ruatangata) and when the two rural villages (Maungatapere and Maungakaramea) will increase significantly and begin to sprawl. The latter scenario will then require policies, including re-zoning, to help contain and limit urban growth in order to reduce the impact on rural productive land and landscape values. The Court found that re-zoning agricultural land to urban uses is possible as long as the development is within reach of employment centres, schools, and other amenities (*Canterbury Regional Council v Christchurch City Council*). The Court also supported urban containment as a policy to protect landscape and ecological values (*North Shore City Council v Auckland Regional Council*). The Court recognised the use of structure plans as an appropriate tool to manage growth and the need to take into account the existing qualities and values of the area.
- Open space** The Review considered the importance of streets, large public spaces, and urban edge open space. The Court found that an open landscape located at the rural periphery is important to urban containment (*North Shore City Council v Auckland Regional Council* and *Mitchell v Waitakere City Council*). The Court also recognised the importance of amenity walking in open spaces (*Intercontinental Hotel and Others v Wellington Regional Council and Waterfront Investments Ltd*), the streetscape and recreational amenity value of roads (*Inner City East Neighbourhood Group v Christchurch City Council*), and the character and people’s perception of open spaces (*Intercontinental Hotel and Others v Wellington Regional Council and Waterfront Investments Ltd*).

2.1.4 The Local Government Act 2002 (LGA)

The LGA seeks to ensure that local authorities engage the community in local decision-making process and promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of their communities, taking a sustainable development approach. A few other principles in the Act are relevant to rural settlements planning and urban design. These include the consideration for diversity of interests in the community; interests of current and future communities; collaboration with other authorities; efficiency in the use of

resources; viability of council investments; prudent stewardship; and the need to maintain and enhance environmental quality (Section 10).

Critical to the performance of local authorities is the formulation of a ten-year long term plan (LTP) that describes the people's socio-economic aspirations for their community. Those provisions in the LTP relevant to Whangarei's rural settlements and urban design will be described in detail later in this report.

Other provisions in the Act that are relevant to urban design in rural settlements are the protection of regional parks (Section 139), provision of libraries for public use (Section 142), preparation of bylaws (Part 8 Subpart 1), and use of development contributions (Part 8 Subpart 5).

2.1.5 Reserves Act 1977

The Reserves Act aims to preserve and manage reserves for the public to enjoy. These reserves include those open spaces and areas possessing (1) recreational use or potential, whether active or passive; (2) wildlife; (3) indigenous flora or fauna; (4) environmental and landscape amenity or interest; or (5) natural, scenic, historic, cultural, archaeological, biological, geological, scientific, educational, community, or other special features or value.

This Act is relevant to rural settlements, in consideration of large natural settings utilised for recreational purposes (e.g. Maungakaramea, Waitira), the protection of ecosystem services and for sporting and recreational facilities. Further, the Act regulates, through the Department of Conservation, the construction of shelters, huts, cabins, lodges, and similar resting or sleeping accommodation on recreation or scenic reserve (Section 45). Local authorities may classify, under this Act, any other land it owns as a reserve (Section 24A).

Reserve management plans, developed in consultation with communities of interest, are required for all land classified as Reserve under this Act and are a common consideration that Councils may take to preserve and enhance the open spaces.

2.1.6 Historic Places Act 1993

The purpose of this Act is to promote the identification, protection, preservation, and conservation of the historical and cultural heritage of the country. The Historic Places Trust maintains the register of all historic places. Although Whangarei's rural settlements do not have any structure or place listed in the register, the Act remains relevant, particularly in considering the future registration of remaining structures potentially worthy of preservation in view of the role they play in providing the story and historic character of the settlements.

2.2 Regional Level

The Regional Policy Statement provides for the integrated management of Northland's natural and physical resources. The RMA requires that the Whangarei District Plan should give effect to the RPS. Northland Regional Council is currently formulating a new RPS, on the basis of a ten year efficiency and effectiveness report made on the current operative RPS. This section will look at the relevant provisions in the operative RPS, the ten year review on those provisions, and the discussion document for the new RPS.

2.2.1 Operative Regional Policy Statement

The relevant provisions in the RPS include involvement of the community in resource management, protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes (ONFL), heritage protection, and transport. The RPS seeks to address the issue with limited community understanding of the cultural and spiritual affinity that the Tangata Whenua have with natural resources and the environment (Issue 13.2.5). It also sets out policies to help protect ONFLs from inappropriate land use activities and use them to provide for the social, economic, and cultural well-being of communities (e.g., by way of tourism and recreation) (Issues 19.2.1 and 19.2.5). It also seeks to investigate and record more heritage sites and establish an inventory of all heritage sites in Northland (Issue 24.2.2). The RPS also recognises related transport issues such as vehicular carbon dioxide emissions, dust from vehicles on unsealed roads, and the need for transport systems that promote tourism development (Issue 29.2.1,4,6).

2.2.2 Ten Year Review of the RPS

The report shows that the policy on community engagement was achieved only to the limited extent required by the RMA but not in an effective manner with the wider community. It recognised that ONFLs are important to establishing a sense of place for Northland.

On the subject of heritage protection, the report indicates that there is a lack of recognition across the region on the less tangible elements of heritage (e.g. landscapes and events). There is therefore a need to provide more direction to improve community awareness of the economic and social value of heritage.

The review also identified the need to promote integrated transport solutions and alternative forms of transportation such as cycle ways, footpaths, and bus links.

The review was followed in October 2010 by a discussion document, seeking to gather public feedback on the scope of the new RPS. All four subject-headings, found relevant to urban design in the current RPS (community involvement, ONFL, heritage protection, transport), were included in the discussion document. Other subjects relevant to urban design and upon which Council has submitted comment, relate to the proposed Regional Community Growth Strategy; development of an integrated, efficient, and equitable network of infrastructure; consideration of climate change in decision-making; monitoring of tools used in protecting historic heritage; and strengthening recognition of the benefits of ONFLs.

2.3 District Level

2.3.1 Whangarei Growth Strategy – Sustainable Futures 30/50

'Sustainable Futures 30/50' sets out the District's long-term vision of growth, taking into account existing constraints. The strategy establishes a future development path for Whangarei, described in the form of five-tier settlement. It is envisaged that this pattern of development will accommodate growth in the next 50 years (see Figure 1 - Section 1 of this report). It is expected that future economic growth will be based on development that recognises the value of the natural, social and cultural environment.

The Strategy incorporates the principles of urban design in determining the preferred future path of the District. Relevant subjects include; intensification, landscape and natural character, climate change, sense of place, historic and cultural heritage, community facilities, transportation, and parks and recreation.

The Strategy identified both Hikurangi and Waipu as significant rural growth nodes. Additionally, both Maungakaremea and Maungatapere were acknowledged as being critical to the District's future development in the rural area. The rural hamlets of Mangapai, Waiotira, Ruatangata, Titoki, Pakotai, and Pipiwai, were identified as important settlement areas in shaping the socio-economic and historical/cultural fabric of the District.

The Strategy recognised the population growth and urban design issues that are anticipated to affect the development of these rural villages through to 2061:

- Hikurangi** Hikurangi contains distinctive historical themes, including rail heritage, however the village is dominated by housing poorly integrated into a landscape dominated by the Hikurangi Plain and several landscape features including Mount Hikurangi and Lake Waro. Significant population growth is expected through to 2061, effectively quadrupling current levels. Comprehensive Structure Planning will be required in order to sensitively accommodate anticipated growth
- Waipu** Waipu's distinctive Scottish history and proximity to both the coast and SH1 are identified in the Growth Strategy as important features, with significant five-fold population growth being anticipated through to 2061. While recent Plan Changes have cemented previous structure plan proposals into the district plan, further comprehensive structure planning will be required in the future to appropriately incorporate anticipated growth.
- Maungatapere** Maungatapere's traditional role as a milk producer of the District as well as its strategic crossroad location, have not necessarily been well utilised as prominent features of the settlement. The Growth Strategy estimates that the village will require an additional 11 ha of urban land by 2061. Other proposals include the potential development of a small medical centre and a community hub; protection of the stone walls; the provision of additional parks and sports fields and the preparation of a structure plan.
- Maungakaremea** The Strategy suggests that Maungakaremea be developed as a quintessential rural village in view of its historic buildings and sites and compact layout. The major issue identified around the village is the use of high-class soils for lifestyle residential. It is estimated that the village will require an additional 26 ha of new urban land together with new parks and a village centre. A structure plan is also recommended for the village.
- Mangapai** Mangapai was originally the principal town in Whangarei. It has a number of sports fields (including a golf course) and its historic Christ Church is the first and principal Anglican church of the District. The Strategy estimates that 900 additional residents will settle in

the area by 2061, although this may increase due to its close proximity to State Highway 1 (3 km) and the availability of water supply. The main issues in the area include the increasing number of lifestyle blocks and susceptibility of depressed land to flooding.

- Waiotira** This hamlet was once a busy village, being strategically located on the junction of the North Auckland Railway Line and the Dargaville Branch. It is projected that its population will increase to around 900 by 2061, although this may increase further, should railway operations between Auckland and Northland expand in the future.
- Ruatangata** Although not serviced by reticulated services, Ruatangata experienced the greatest population increase in the rural area in recent years. The area has a long history of coal mining but the current character of the locality is predominantly lifestyle blocks and pastoral farming. It is expected that the population will substantially increase to 1,800 in 2061, in view of its proximity to Kamo.
- Titoki** Development in this rural hamlet is centred on the main resource, the Wairua River. The river allowed for the operation of a hydroelectric plant since 1916, and provides opportunities for river-based tourism development. Titoki is not serviced by Council's reticulated services but its population is estimated to increase to around 600 in 2061.
- Pipiwai** The closest service centre of this hamlet is Kamo. The main issue identified is the large tract of flood-susceptible land east and south of the settlement and the absence of reticulated services. The area experienced a sharp decline in population, but is expected to increase to 400 in 2061. The hamlet has a unique character made possible by a Marae located next to the Mormon Church.

2.3.2 Long Term Council Community Plan 2009-2019 (LTCCP)

The LTCCP is the key strategic planning document of Whangarei District. It provides a long-term focus for the decisions and actions of Council, based on the community's desired outcomes for the District. All six community outcomes identified in the Plan apply to the whole of the District. They provide the rationale to incorporate urban design in rural settlement planning. The desired outcomes are:

- 1 A sustainable, environmentally responsible District which values its natural uniqueness
- 2 A District which is safe and crime free
- 3 A community which is healthy and educated
- 4 A vibrant and growing local economy
- 5 A District with community programmes and facilities for all
- 6 A community which values its culture and heritage

Following are specific initiatives/projects identified in the Plan that may affect the planning and design of rural settlements:

- 1 Transportation – none specific but may include upgrade of District roads to cope with requirements of logging trucks
- 2 Wastewater – none specific but may include maintenance of Waiotira wastewater system
- 3 Solid waste – none
- 4 Stormwater – none specific but may include the preparation of catchment management plans
- 5 Water – projects recognised but not budgeted include Poroti main upgrades and land purchase for a reservoir in Maungakaramea
- 6 Libraries – none specific but may include maintenance of the mobile library
- 7 Parks and recreation – none
- 8 Community services – none
- 9 Property – none
- 10 Building compliance – none
- 11 Regulatory services – none
- 12 Resource consents – none
- 13 Policy and monitoring – Long Term Sub-regional Growth Strategy (30/50), development of rural residential structure plans, development of the district plan, statement of the environment reporting, environmental education, landscape review, studies on the effect of climate change, and studies on

rural residential (lifestyle blocks), Papakainga housing, heritages areas, and sites of significance to Maori

- 14 Support services – none specific but may include management of rural fire service and development of Community Response Plans

2.3.3 Whangarei Operative District Plan

The Whangarei Operative District Plan does not have dedicated chapters on rural settlements or urban design. Consistent with the approach taken by the MFE Urban Design Case Law Review, urban design in rural settlements can be considered through related provisions in specific chapters of the Plan.

Chapter 2 – Introduction to Procedures

Council adopted the rolling review process in the development of the District Plan. This chapter outlines the proposed structure and approach of the district plan. Three provisions relate to rural settlements and urban design. *First*, the role of key urban design principles, sense of place and connection, are recognised as important elements in providing the contextual framework for district planning. *Second*, the rural area, is recognised as one of three areas (others being coastal and urban) that will provide the geographical context of the plan. *Third*, there are provisions for using design guides as a tool for managing site-specific effects.

Chapter 5 – Amenity values

The significant issues and policies that affect the amenity values in rural settlements include the effects of incompatible uses, sporadic development, dust, bulk and massing, frontage, and use of living courts.

Chapter 6 – Urban form and development

The Chapter recognises that the location, shape, and form of future settlements should help accommodate growth and not compromise existing amenity and historic values and infrastructure efficiency. The main intent of this chapter is to promote consolidated development and discourage sporadic and ribbon development.

Chapter 8 – Subdivision and development

The Chapter recognises that subdivision and development can have effects on landscapes, amenity, natural character, and heritage values. The policies seek to control deviation from local character, sporadic development, reverse sensitivity, and allow for an efficient infrastructure layout, consolidated development, appropriate density, and diverse lot size allotment.

Chapter 13 – Heritage buildings sites and objects

The relevant provisions include the protection and enhancement of buildings, stonewalls, and archaeological sites, that contribute to heritage and amenity values, and providing incentives to encourage owners to preserve these heritage resources. Christ Church (Anglican) at Ormandy Road, Mangapai is listed under Appendix 3 of the Plan as Group II heritage building.

Chapter 14 – Heritage trees

The alteration and felling of heritage trees can significantly affect the heritage, cultural, amenity, and natural values of rural settlements. The policy provisions include the identification and protection of heritage trees.

Chapter 15 – Open space

Open spaces provide recreational opportunities, help preserve the natural character of rural settlements, and provides for the community's health and well-being. Related objectives include the provision of adequate open space needs, creation of linkages, and inappropriate subdivision.

Chapter 16 – Landscapes

The district plan seeks to protect the amenity value of outstanding landscapes and natural features. Some rural settlements are located in close proximity to five outstanding natural features and sites. Due to this, certain areas in those settlements have been identified level 5 or 6 landscape sensitive areas. Appendix 13 of the Plan identified five outstanding natural features and geological sites that are located within close proximity of the rural settlements. Three are nationally important and two are of regional importance (Maunu Volcanic Cone, Maungakarama Scoria Cone). These are:

- 1 Whatatitiri Shield Volcano – west south west of Maungatapere township

- 2 Maungatapere Volcanic Cone – south south west of Maungatapere township
- 3 Maunu Volcanic Cone – northeast of Maungatapere township
- 4 Maungakamea Scoria Cone – lies between O’Carroll Road and Crawford Road
- 5 Titoki Natural Bridge – on Waitomotomo Stream, north of Titoki

Chapter 22 – Road transport

This Chapter provides for the safe and efficient transportation of goods and people through the district and the development of future linkages and facilities for cyclists and pedestrians to ensure their safety.

2.3.4 Iwi Management Plans

Council adopted management plans from three iwi groups, Patuharakeke (2007), Ngatiwai (2007), and Ngāti Hine (2008). There are no explicit provisions in the Patuharakeke Plan on urban design and rural settlement planning, except for its recognition of related provisions in the RMA. The Ngatiwai Plan does not have related provisions but recognises the importance of considering the preservation of natural resources in planning.

Ngāti Hine Environmental Management Plan 2008

In recognising Ngāti Hine as *kaitiaki*, issue 28 of this Plan provides for the need to include urban design in environmental planning and policy development (p. 76). The following provisions are particularly important for the design of rural settlements:

- 1 support for planning initiatives that ensure adequate infrastructure is in place before development occurs
- 2 support for low-impact design and innovative solutions
- 3 recognition that urban centres should be designed to accommodate people not cars
- 4 recognition that structure planning should be catchment-based

2.3.5 Urban Design Strategy

The ‘Making Places to Shape our Future: Urban Design Strategy for Whangarei’ is the first of a series of design guides that Council is formulating as part of its commitment under the Urban Design Protocol. The Strategy provides the vision of a high quality design for Whangarei and the direction Council and the community may follow to achieve this vision. The Strategy recognises some issues that are relevant to rural settlements. These include the geographical constraints of settlements, urban sprawl, poor urban grain, lack of focus, lack of vitality, eclectic architectural style, lack of articulation of historic and cultural heritage in public places, and equity issues of affordable housing and public activities. The intent of the Urban Design Strategy is to make urban environments as attractive as possible to encourage urban living.

The Strategy sets out the vision of high quality urban design –where Whangarei thrives as a leading meeting place and destination that successfully draws people to settle to live, work, and re-visit the District, now and into the future.

To achieve this vision, the Strategy sets out 8 qualities that are applicable to the design of rural settlements as well as larger urban areas - compact, connected, distinctive, diverse, attractive, appropriate, sustainable and safe. The Strategy illustrates how these qualities can be achieved through design, stakeholder involvement, and other mechanisms, including design guidelines.

3 Issues

3.1 Amenity

Only a few of the rural settlements provide varying levels and types of amenity to both residents and visitors. The amenity is largely visual, provided by mountains and hills (Hikurangi, Waipu, Maungatapere, Maungakamea, Pakotai), river (Waipu, Titoki), sports grounds (Hikurangi, Maungakamea), and historic heritage (Hikurangi, Maungakamea). There is no policy provision in the District Plan on the aspect of view shafts to help protect the amenity values of these natural features and landscapes to rural settlements. It is important that the amenity values of these resources be protected for the enjoyment of the residents and visitors and for the economic wellbeing of present and future generations. Due to their unplanned nature and lack of a focal point, many rural hamlets have poorer amenity values (e.g. Waiotira, Ruatangata). Some have historic buildings and infrastructure that could help contribute to the development of the story and distinctive character of the area, but these are not utilised to increase the amenity value of these resources. Rural

settlements are known worldwide as the source of fresh produce with the potential of developing into a tourist attraction and amenity (e.g. Glenbervie). This specific amenity, however, does not reflect in any of the rural settlements.

3.2 Character

A few of the rural settlements have a unique character reflecting elements of both urban and country, at various scales (e.g. Maungatapere, Maungakaramea, Titoki). Other rural hamlets also have the potential to adopt the same character in the future, considering their geographical relationship with the North Auckland Railway lines (e.g. Hikurangi, Mangapai, Waiotira). This mixture is fundamental to the character and functionality of these settlements. This means that the type and standard of amenity and facilities associated with either pure urban or pure rural environment is not appropriate for these areas. The appearance and the mixture of uses in these settlements create a unique environment that needs to be maintained at a low scale through urban design techniques. The openness and low-density nature of these settlements should be maintained by introducing controls in section size, building coverage, building height, building setback, frontage, and other related parameters.

3.3 Heritage

It is important to preserve the intrinsic value of rural settlements and the history associated with them for present and future generations to enjoy. Future development must recognise and complement with the existing form, style, scale, and character of historic buildings and sites in the rural settlements. While urban growth is inevitable, it is important that future development conform to the general character of the village to preserve its original theme. Contemporary building styles may be applicable in certain circumstances, due to cost constraints, building technology, and visual amenity provided by mixing the old and new. They can maintain the character of the original village, through contextual application of scale, colour, theme, and layout.

3.4 Density

The issue on density varies between villages and hamlets. The major issue for the villages is the location of future living zones, while for the hamlets the uptake of Living 1 zones currently allocated in the District Plan is highlighted. All rural settlements have relatively the same area allocated for living zones in the District Plan, except for Maungatapere, which has only around half of all others' allocated land. This allocation needs further review considering the growth potential of Maungatapere being located on a crossroad to Kaikohe and Dargaville. Although this locational advantage contributes to the economic development of the village, it has density problems. For example, Living 1 environment is currently provided only the western side of the highway while a number of the community facilities are located on the eastern side. Although Maungakaramea village is not located along the highway, it may have the same problem in the future. The Living 1 environment is currently spread out around a crossroad where all community facilities concentrate. There is a need to consider road and pedestrian safety in determining where future living zones will be allocated in these villages. For the hamlets, there is a need to encourage residents to live within walking distance of the hamlets. This will help increase the central importance of hamlets, contribute to their development, and reduce sprawl into rural land. For the identified growth nodes of Hikurangi and Waipu, the accommodation of four and five-fold population growth presents greater difficulties, while acknowledging that these issues will be the subject of comprehensive structure planning in the future.

3.5 Movement

Generally, the villages are more compact and connected than the hamlets, which are sporadic and relatively detached. The potential for development in some of the hamlets (e.g. Waiotira, Pipiwai) is constrained by their isolated location and inadequate connection with the District's road network. The villages of Maungatapere and Maungakaramea are relatively compact, with existing Living 1 zones located within 800-meter walking distance to them. The present urban form of these villages allows for an increase in pedestrian movement in the future. Maungatapere has good road connectivity with adjacent hamlets, but not with Maungakaramea. Another observation is that there is an absence of farm-to-market flows in the rural area, as there are no dedicated market place in the villages and hamlets. As mentioned earlier, local markets can help increase the amenity value of rural settlements. Establishing a direct arterial corridor between Maungatapere and Maungakaramea can help clarify the role of villages and hamlets in rural development, increase movement of local produce within the rural environment, and provide opportunities for tourism development. Urban growth

The extent of development in the rural settlements varies and the boundary with the rest of the rural environment is not distinctively clear, excepting in the case of the Waipu and Hikurangi growth nodes. The rural hamlets are so small, consisting only of a few scattered houses and amenities. For those with no known community facilities, passersby hardly notice them (e.g. Ruatangata). It is important to consider whether and to what extent, development within and around these settlements should be allowed or restricted. The boundaries may need to be clearly identified in order to protect the character of the settlements, contain growth, and prevent sprawl into rural land. In determining the extent or direction of future growth as well as role of the rural settlements, it is important to take into account potential conflicts, complementarities, and similarities with nearby rural activities and settlements. Significant urban growth in the Waipu and Hikurangi growth nodes must be comprehensively addressed through comprehensive structure planning

3.6 Open space

Although all rural settlements have large open rural lands around their periphery, it is important to allocate open spaces in the centre to provide a place where the community can gather, enjoy, and play. In many cases, open spaces function as the core, centre, and focus of community living, providing a sense of place and overall character for the locality. Hikurangi, Waipu, Maungakaramea and Mangapai have open spaces within their settlements and should be utilised to help increase their amenity values. For other settlements, it is important that any form of open space be provided to define the centrality of their villages and promote community development.

3.7 Issues Conclusion

In concluding the discussion on the key issues related to urban design and the future development of rural settlements, the following items have been identified:

- 1 The effect of urban growth on the amenity and character of rural settlements.
- 2 The effect of growth of rural settlements on outstanding natural features and landscapes.
- 3 The effect of infrastructure development on the amenity and character of rural settlements.
- 4 The effect of infrastructure development on the pedestrian safety of rural communities.
- 5 The recognition and preservation of the heritage value of rural settlements.
- 6 Creation and protection of central open spaces that promote the development of rural communities.
- 7 Accommodating diverse land use activities that promote the social and economic well-being of rural communities.
- 8 Ensuring connectivity between rural farms and settlements.
- 9 Comprehensive structure planning requirements for both Hikurangi and Waipu.

4 Best practice

MFE has released a number of publications and programmes to help signatories to Urban Design Protocol, champion the use of urban design in their organisation and projects. The Protocol and MFE's publications helped pave the way for the inclusion of urban design provisions in district plans (e.g. Wellington City Council) and formulation of urban design framework for towns and cities, including those that have not ratified the Protocol (e.g. New Plymouth, Rotorua). The urban design framework, which takes a design-led approach planning, is gradually taking over the role of structural plans in New Zealand planning (e.g. Rotorua, Palmerston North). Despite these developments, the use of urban design framework and the principles it embodies is not known in rural settlement planning.

5 Options

5.1 Whangarei District Growth Strategy - Sustainable Futures 30/50

Whangarei District Growth Strategy - Sustainable Futures 30/50 was adopted by Council in September 2010. After assessing a number of different growth strategy options, a consolidated future development pattern was chosen and adopted by Council. This will guide future decision making on infrastructure and the spatial arrangement of development across the District.

The growth strategy concludes that *“Villages (i.e. coastal, rural and urban) or the primary centre (i.e. the proposed Marsden Primary Centre) should be compact and walkable, with inviting streets and public spaces for community events. Villages/primary centre will serve as focal points for public gatherings as a result of their outstanding public spaces. In addition, villages would be created*

pedestrian in scale, accessible by diverse multi-modal means, and varied with uses and activities that serve local daily needs.”

The District Plan will be one of the tools used to implement the growth strategy adopted through the Sustainable Futures project.

In the formulation of the Implementation Plan for the Growth Strategy, it is recommended that the role of specific rural settlements in the short, medium and long terms, be identified clearly. For example, Mangapai could be developed as a tourist destination in the short and medium terms and satellite residential community in the long term. This should direct the district plan in terms of determining whether growth or preservation will be encouraged in each of the rural settlements. The Implementation Plan should also identify key farm-to-market roads and projects that will increase connectivity between rural settlements. It should identify the settlements where additional central open spaces will be provided to promote walkability, establish a focal point for public gatherings, and promote the continued development of rural communities. In the formulation of the Implementation Plan for the Growth Strategy, it is recommended that the role of specific rural settlements in the short, medium and long terms, be identified clearly. For example, Mangapai could be developed as a tourist destination in the short and medium terms and satellite residential community in the long term. This should direct the district plan in terms of determining whether growth or preservation will be encouraged in each of the rural settlements. The Implementation Plan should also identify key farm-to-market roads and projects that will increase connectivity between rural settlements.

5.2 Options for Implementing the Rural Development Strategy

5.2.1 District Plan Options

1 Undertake a plan change to introduce an urban design section into the District Plan

Since urban design is integrative in nature, this option provides the opportunity to incorporate a separate section on Urban Design in the District Plan, covering objectives and policies for rural, coastal, and urban areas.

2 Undertake a review of Chapter 6 of the Operative District Plan

Chapter 6 (Urban Form and Development) could be amended, as part of the District Plan rolling review, to include provisions on urban design, and not mere reference to design guidelines. In the spirit of efficiency and simplicity, the environment rules for rural settlements can take the form of land use allocation as provided for in the operative District Plan (e.g. Living 1, 2, 3, Business 1, 2, 3 etc).

3 Undertake a plan change to introduce a new mixed-use environment

The Operative District Plan uses urban zoning, Living Environments in most rural settlements. A new mixed-use environment could be provided in the District Plan to promote the social and economic well-being of rural communities. The rules under the mixed-use environment should apply to coastal, urban, and rural areas but with specific conditions that help preserve specific character and settings that vary across these geographical areas.

4 Undertake a plan change to introduce rural settlement limits and special zones

Council could introduce an urban limit to the zoned urban land, (i.e. Living, Business, and Mixed-use environments) allocated in a rural settlement area either by description or mapping. It could also introduce special zones to protect certain amenity, character, and heritage values within rural settlements.

5 Introduce District Plan provisions controlling subdivision and building design

To ensure that the character and scale of rural settlements as well as view shafts to notable landscapes are preserved, Council could introduce District Plan provisions requiring applicants for resource consents on construction of subdivisions, buildings and structures, to submit design drawings that show how the character, scale, and view shafts are protected or enhanced.

6 Introduce District Plan provisions that require urban design assessment

For projects of a relatively large scale (including infrastructure development), it could be made mandatory to require, as part of the resource consent application, an urban design assessment, to ensure the character of the rural settlements is preserved and pedestrian safety is taken into consideration.

7 Introduce District Plan provisions that require social impact assessment

For all large-scale developments and policy projects, it may also be important for proponents to submit, as part of the resource consent application or Section 32 of the plan change, a social impact assessment. This will help identify the impacts of the project to the community and determine measures to help mitigate these impacts.

8 Create an urban design framework

Council could make the Urban Design Framework a priority project for both Maungatapere and Maungakaremea. The Urban Design Framework takes a design-led approach to structure planning, not just allocation of land uses. It should also demonstrate anticipated policy outcomes in the District Plans, given the future development of rural settlements. The Framework will establish important view shafts, determine the general character of the settlements, and define their urban limits. These three elements of the Framework Plan should be incorporated into the proposed Urban Design Chapter of the District Plan. The preservation and development of the rural hamlets will be dealt with through the policy provisions recommended above.

9 Establish urban design guidelines and assessment criteria

Council could formulate a set of design guidelines and assessment criteria that will help proponents align their development proposal with the intent of the Urban Design Framework and provide consent planners the basis to make appropriate decisions. The design guidelines may include specific colours, materials, shape, height, and ornamental treatment that will help enhance the character of specific rural settlements.

5.2.2 Non-Regulatory Options

The non-regulatory methods may include increased community awareness and education on urban design, incentives and subsidies to encourage proponents to contribute to good urban design in rural settlements, mainstreet programmes, infrastructure management plans, and three-dimensional modelling for pilot projects.

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