

## 5 Topic: Development and consent activity

### 5.1 What is included in this topic

This section identifies the consent activity and extent of development in the heritage area from 2012 through to June 2017 and compares this to the 2008-2012 period of activity where possible. It provides a broad comparison of planning and building consents over these periods in respect to the following areas:

- physical changes from consents (buildings, land use, vegetation removal)
- extent and location of subdivision
- comparison of some of these matters with areas outside of the heritage area.

### Monitoring sources

Information for this topic has been primarily obtained from the planning and building consent teams in Auckland Council. This information relates to the scope and scale of development as captured by the administration of the Operative Waitākere Section (2003) of the Auckland Council District Plan (April 2012 - September 2016) and the Auckland Unitary Plan (October 2016 - June 2017). Building consent information has also been used as this information provides increased reliability about the actual implementation of any activity or works that has resource consent. Some information has also been obtained from analysis of aerial photography, the latest being 2016 Lidar aerials.

### 5.2 Key findings

#### Relevant heritage features (section 7 of the Act): 2(h), (i)

#### Summary – development and consent activity

- The number of subdivisions creating new lots and land use consents have declined between 2012 and 2017.
- Tree and vegetation consent applications have declined by nearly half between 2012 and 2017.
- Ridgeline rule infringement consents have declined by more than half between 2012 and 2017.
- The Auckland Unitary Plan has applied a planning framework to the heritage area that seeks to achieve the same or similar resource management outcomes to those achieved in the former Auckland Council District Plan – Operative Waitākere Section 2003 (Waitākere City District Plan).

**Progress made towards achieving the objectives:**

- From April 2000 to June 2017 the number of subdivision and development resource consents have decreased. This has contributed to achieving the objectives to retain:
  - the natural landforms and landscapes which give the area its distinctive character
  - the dominance of natural and rural landscape elements reflected in coastal villages, low-density residential and urban areas in forest settings and the rural character of the foothills.
- There is currently insufficient data and information about vegetation coverage to determine if the state of the environment has changed since the 2013 Monitoring Report.

**5.3 What we measure changes against**

A range of indicators were used to assess development pressures, responses to those pressures through the consents process and physical changes occurring as a result of development.

The development and consent decision indicators are:

- number of subdivision, land use and building consent applications
- number of fee simple subdivision consents applied for and granted and the number of new dwellings applied for
- approval rate for land use consents
- number of land use consents for new buildings, extensions and ancillary buildings, and vegetation removal or modification that have been granted and implemented
- land use consents granted for development on sensitive ridgelines
- future development potential index (potential for new subdivision and the number of existing vacant lots). These were derived from analysis of the Waitākere City District Plan zoning provisions and the zoning in the Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in part 2017).

**5.4 Changes between 2013 and 2018****5.4.1 Subdivision, land use and building consents**

The data in Table 17 below reflects all types of applications, from boundary adjustments and minor building works to more significant subdivision, residential development and vegetation removal. Since April 2000 the number of subdivisions, land use consents and building consents sought within the heritage area have continued to decrease.

**Table 17: Subdivision, Land Use and Building Consent applications as an indicator of development pressures 2000-2012 and 2012-2017 (June)**

Period	Subdivision consents granted (all types)	Land use consents granted (all types)	Building Consents (all types)
April 2000-March 2004	150	1643	No data available
April 2004-March 2008	167	1387	1703
April 2008- March 2012	70	1155	1209
April 2012- June 2017	36	530	270



Example of a replacement dwelling granted consent in 2016 at Piha. Previously a two storey dwelling existed on the site. Photo dated November 2017.

## Subdivision

The creation of new fee simple lots and boundary adjustments are the most common forms of subdivision activity in the heritage area (refer to Map 12 below). From 2012 to 2017 there has been a reduction in the number of subdivision applications and the number of new lots created when compared to earlier time periods (refer to Table 18).

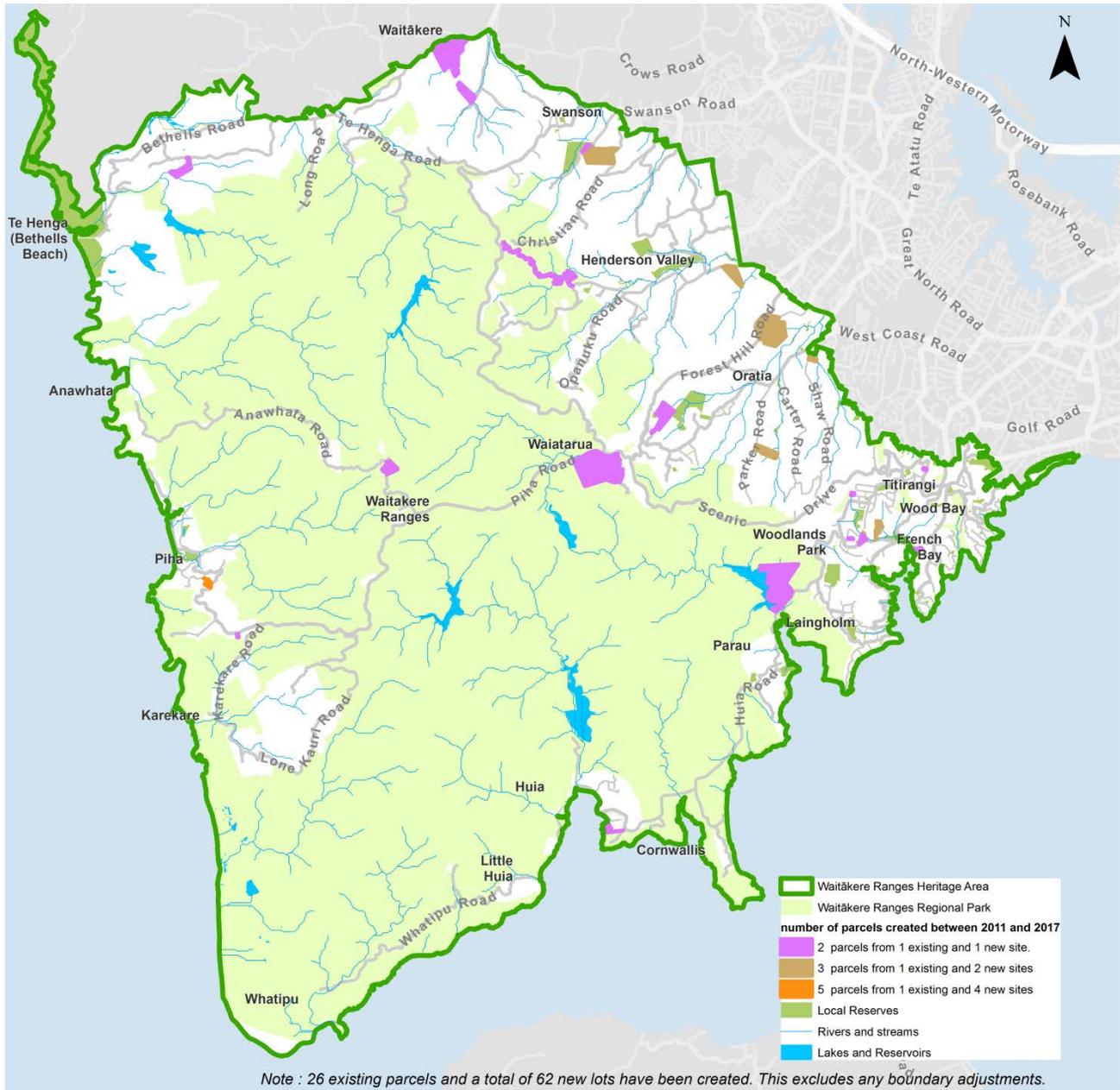
Table 18: Subdivision consent applications

Period	Applications for fee simple subdivision	Number of additional fee simple lots consented	Number of boundary adjustments
April 2004-March 2008	75	164	47
April 2008-March 2012	41	108	20
April 2012-June 2017	30	62	25



Example of a new subdivision and dwelling at Piha. Subdivision consents granted in 2015 and land use consents granted in 2016. Photo taken November 2017.

Map 12: Map of subdivision changes between April 2012-June 2017



### Land use consents

The approval rate for land use consents has changed since the Act came into effect. There has been a decrease in the number of consents both applied for and granted (refer to Table 19). This indicates the rigor of the planning environment which supports the purpose of the Act and its objectives of promoting the protection and enhancement of the heritage area’s heritage features for present and future generations.

Table 19: Decisions on Land Use consents

Land Use Consent	Granted	Declined	Lapsed, Withdrawn, Closed
April 2004-March 2008	1387	12	34
April 2008-March 2012	1155	0	173
April 2012-June 2017	540	1	295

### Types of land use consents 2008-2017

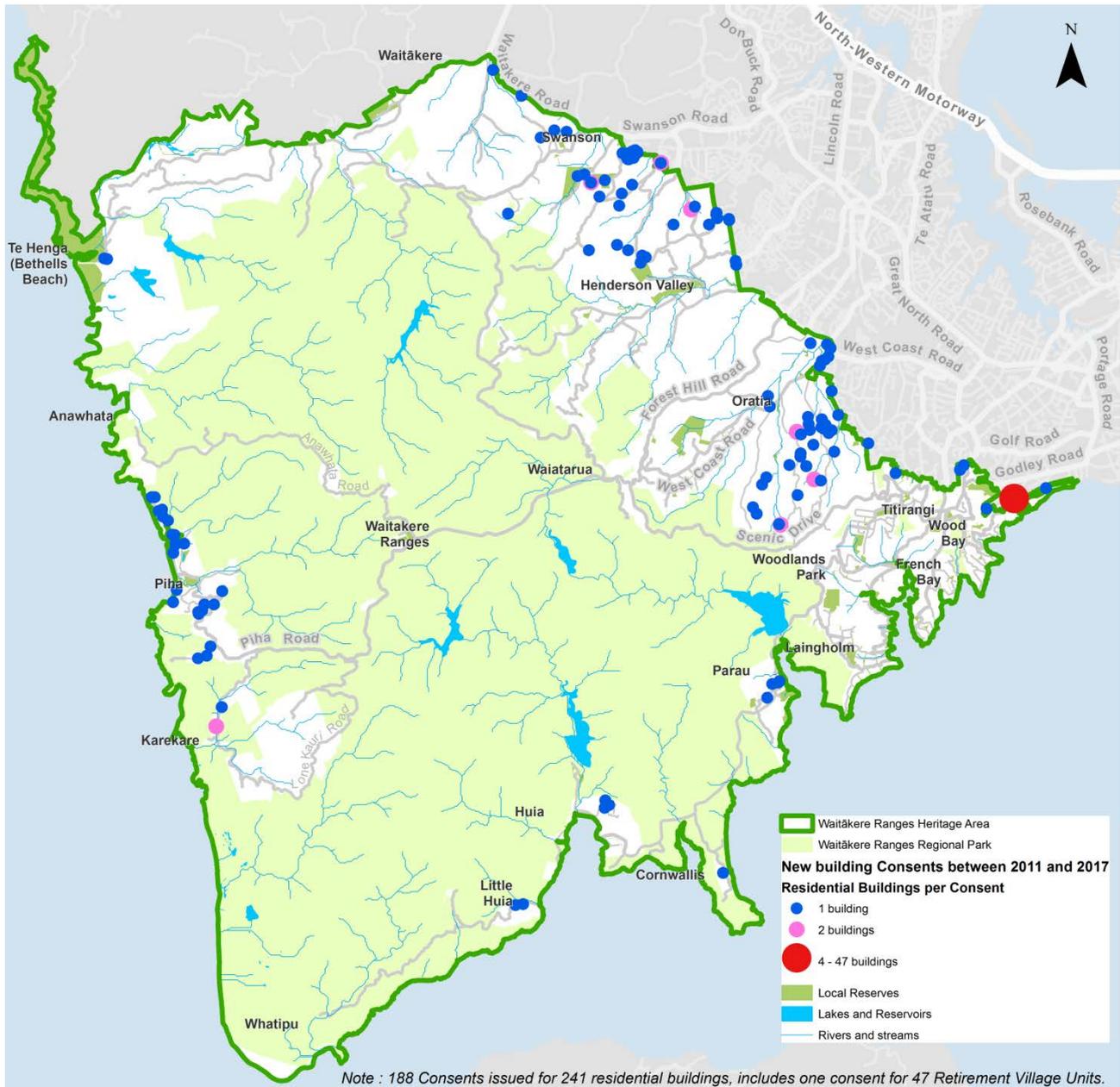
The land use consent data is further grouped below in Table 20 into the main types of consents sought. The land use consents are sorted into zoning categories that generally reflect the different landscape types. The distribution of new buildings (mainly new dwellings) is shown for each zone in Map 13 below.

The greatest number of new dwelling construction occurred in the Bush Living / Large Lot zoned urban areas of Titirangi, the coastal village of Piha and the foothills of Oratia.

Table 20: Types of consents granted by zone between April 2008-March 2012 and between April 2012-June 2017.

Land Use Zoning Type Waitākere Plan 2008-2016/Auckland Unitary Plan 2017	New Buildings		Extensions to existing buildings/ancillary buildings		Tree removal		Total	
	2008-2012	2012-2017	2008-2012	2012-2017	2008-2012	2012-2017	2008-2012	2012-2017
<b>Bush Living /Large Lot zone</b>	69	39	135	111	295	147	499	297
<b>Coastal Villages/Rural and Coastal Settlements zone</b>	20	20	20	28	41	13	81	61
<b>Foothills/ Waitākere Ranges and Foothills Zones</b>	36	37	41	116	69	29	146	182
<b>Total</b>	125	96	196	255	405	189	726	540

Map 13: Dwellings consented



Note. Dwellings and other building works enable the clearance of vegetation for the building platform as part of those works, up to a maximum of 300m<sup>2</sup> per site.

#### 5.4.2 Land use consents for activities on sensitive ridgelines 2008-2017

Between April 2008 and March 2012 there were 87 resource consents granted for activities on sensitive ridgelines (refer to Table 21 below). The majority of these were in the Bush Living / Large Lot landscapes or zones. These are a subset of all the resource consents granted.

Between April 2012 to June 2017 there were 37 resource consents granted for activities on sensitive ridgelines (refer to Table 21 below). This confirms a reduction in applications

that may give rise to the largest visual effects in the heritage area. This is separately analysed in Section 3: Natural landforms, landscape and the night sky topic. This supports the heritage area objective 8(g) in that the district plan provisions contribute to maintaining the quality and diversity of landscapes in the heritage area.

**Table 21: Land use consents for activities on sensitive ridgelines 2008-2017**

Land use consents by zone	April 2008-March 2012	April 2012-June 2017
<b>Bush living/Large Lot zone</b>	63	23
<b>Coastal Village/Rural and Coastal Settlements zone</b>	5	6
<b>Foothills/Waitākere Ranges and Foothills zones</b>	19	8
<b>Total</b>	87	37

### 5.4.3 Land use consents to clear vegetation 2008-2017

The resource consent data used for monitoring analysis below is indicative, as it is currently difficult to extract exact quantitative data. This is complicated by the planning provisions that have applied to the heritage area during this reporting period being in transition from the legacy Waitākere District Plan to the Auckland Unitary Plan Operative in Part. In addition, in respect of data relating to tree and vegetation clearance during this monitoring period, the amendment of section 76 of the Resource Management Act that removed district plan rules that protected categories of trees (for example native trees over a certain height/diameter) in urban areas (urban environment allotments), came into effect. In this context, while all attempts have been made to obtain accurate data the statistics below are used to indicate a trend, rather than representing total statistical accuracy.

Subject to the proviso above, data indicates that 405 resource consents to clear vegetation were granted between April 2008 and March 2012 (refer to Table 22 below). For applications involving indigenous vegetation removal, an estimated 34 per cent of these were for a single tree, and 47 per cent for four trees or less.

Between April 2012 and June 2017 there were 242 resource consents granted to clear vegetation (refer to Table 22 below). Of these 30 per cent of the applications involved resource consents to remove a single indigenous tree, and 25 per cent to remove indigenous trees (two-four). Most of the larger clearances involved exotic trees (particularly pines and eucalypts from wood lots). Vegetation clearance includes the felling of trees, trimming and works within the dripline of trees especially by service providers.

Table 22: Land use consents to clear vegetation 2008-2017 in urban, rural and open space zones within the heritage area

Vegetation clearance by number or area	Indigenous		Exotic		Indigenous and Exotic or not defined		Totals	
	2008-2012	2012-2017	2008-2012	2012-2017	2008-2012	2012-2017	2008-2012	2012-2017
<b>Single Tree</b>	83	76	61	38	2	1	146	115
<b>2-4 Trees</b>	26	63	28	21	5	7	59	41
<b>5-15 Trees</b>	6	18	14	4	3	6	23	28
<b>15-50 Trees</b>	3	1	2	4	2	0	7	5
<b>More than 50 Trees</b>	0	0	4	1	0	0	4	1
<b>500-2000m2 cleared</b>	2	0	0	2	0	0	2	2
<b>More than 2000m2 cleared</b>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	121	158	109	70	12	14	242	242
<b>Note:</b> Consents granted comprised of tree removals, trimming and works within the dripline of trees.								

The growth of Auckland has led to an increase in the overall consenting activity in the wider Auckland region. Data indicates that applications and granted resource consents in the heritage area to remove trees or clear vegetation have remained static. However, this data has been collected over a period of time in which there have been changes to the planning provisions that apply and RMA amendments relating to tree and vegetation clearance.

A more detailed analysis of vegetation change will be undertaken through the review of the 2016 Lidar data. Lidar stands for 'Light Detection and Ranging', and is a remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure variable distances to the Earth. Lidar provides a high resolution data capture which allows software analysis of the of vegetation and urban foot print.

High resolution aerial imagery and Lidar data has recently been obtained for the heritage area, but analysis of this information was not available at the time of preparing this report.

#### 5.4.4 Changes to vegetation cover and the urban footprint

Protecting, enhancing and restoring the dominance of natural and rural landscape elements over the built environment is an objective of the Act. This is linked to the identified heritage features of the Act. Section 7(2)(h) states that the eastern foothills act as a buffer and transition between metropolitan Auckland and the forested ranges and coast, and seeks the retention of rural character for the northern and eastern foothills.

Measurement of the density of the 'urban footprint' (i.e. the area covered by buildings and impervious surfaces) has been undertaken by the council for storm water management purposes. The estimated 2012 baseline for the heritage area in comparison with adjacent urban areas is shown in Table 23 below.

**Table 23: Extent of urban footprint (buildings and impervious surfaces) in adjacent metropolitan administrative areas and the heritage area**

Name of area	% of urban footprint coverage 2012
Henderson Massey urban area	38.1%
Waitākere Ranges urban area (east of the heritage area)	30.3%
Whau Local Board	44.8%
Heritage Area-Bush Living	6.4%
Heritage Area-Foothills	3.6%
Heritage Area-Parkland	0.1%

The rate of change in the urban footprint was able to be estimated in 2012 from aerial photographic analysis. Between April 2008 and April 2012 an estimated 2.2 hectares of new buildings and impervious surfaces were added to the urban footprint of the heritage area. This is a very small fraction of one per cent of the total land area of the heritage area. This data (derived from Lidar analysis) has not been updated at this time.

A new building footprint and impermeable surface layer is also being developed by council. Once this data is available it will also be used for measuring vegetation changes between 2018 and 2023.

## 5.5 Development capacity

The Auckland Unitary Plan zones provide a policy and rule framework that manages development in accordance with zones and environmental constraints. There are always uncertainties in doing a development capacity assessment due to the limitations that may restrict the ability of land to be subdivided e.g. natural hazards, landscape, access and infrastructure servicing issues. Also landowners may not wish to take up the full development opportunities provided by the zoning and thereby preclude the full achievement of development capacity for the land.

However this exercise has value in understanding the overall provision for development available for the heritage area and what levels of development may reasonably be expected to occur.

Table 24: Existing and potential vacant lot development capacity

	Existing vacant lots allowing a dwelling		New potential vacant lots allowing a dwelling		Total development capacity from existing and potential subdivision	
	Waitākere City District Plan	Auckland Unitary Plan	Waitākere City District Plan	Auckland Unitary Plan	Waitākere City District Plan	Auckland Unitary Plan
<b>Bush Living zone in Waitākere City District Plan or Single House or Large Lot zones in Auckland Unitary Plan</b>	575	300	386	301	961	601
<b>Coastal Villages zone in Waitākere City District Plan or Rural and Coastal Settlements zone in</b>	108	82	57	6	165	88

<b>Auckland Unitary Plan</b>						
<b>Foothills zone in the Waitākere City District Plan or Waitākere Ranges and Waitākere Foothills zones in Auckland Unitary Plan</b>	250	525	249	352	499	877

## Notes:

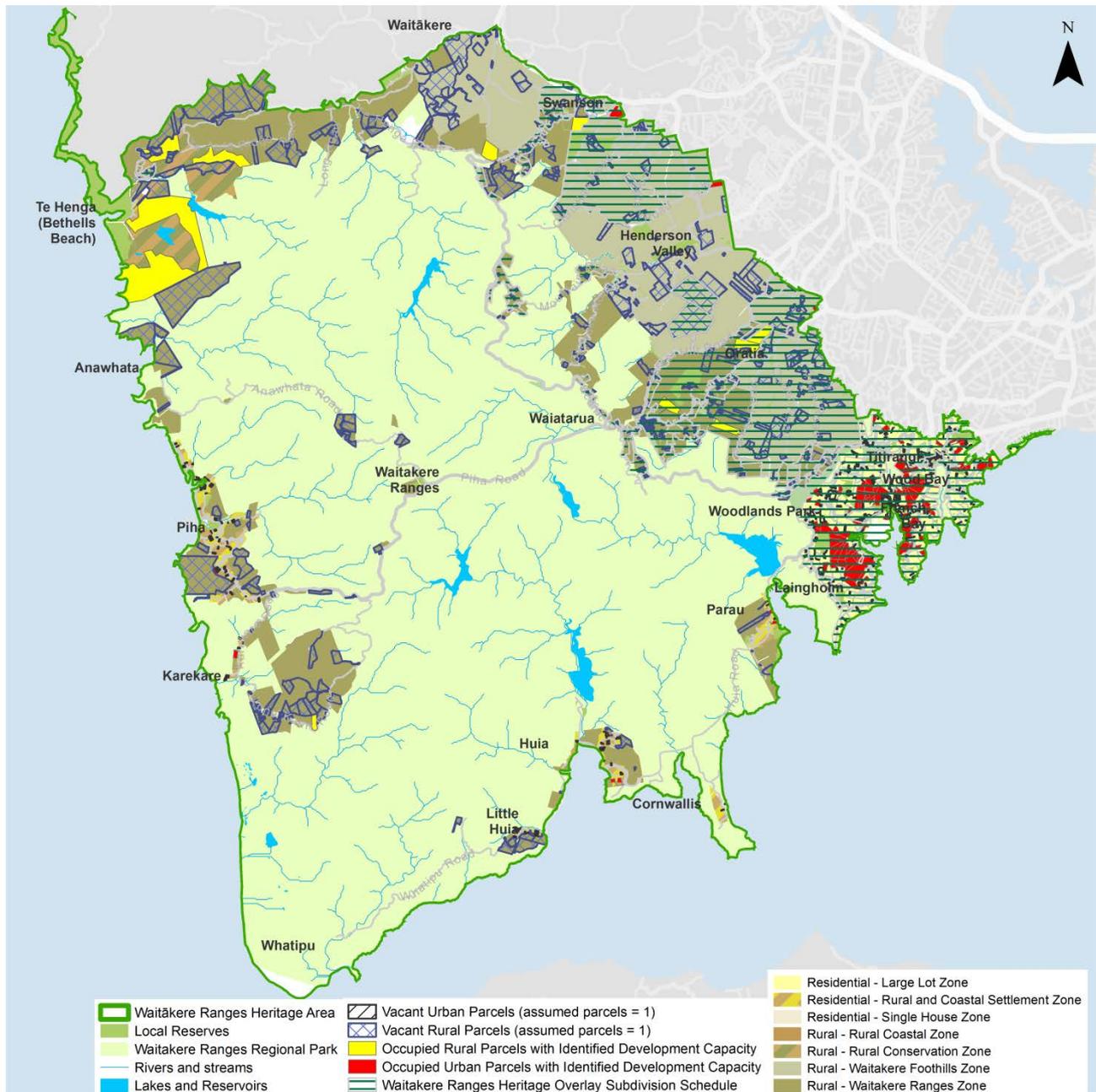
- The Bush Living and Coastal zones of the Waitākere City District Plan are generally equivalent to the Large Lot and the Rural and Coastal Settlement zones of the Auckland Unitary Plan.
- The Foothills zone of the Waitākere City District Plan generally equates to the Rural - Waitākere Ranges and Waitākere Foothills zones of the Auckland Unitary Plan. The main difference is that the activity status of subdivision beyond that allocated is subject to an Environment Court appeal. At the time of writing the matter is unresolved.
- The Rural - Waitākere Ranges and Waitākere Foothills zones are supported by an Overlay and Precincts that provide a defined level of subdivision capacity over and above the zones. These are accounted for in the above figures, and have been adjusted to deduct the subdivisions approved between 2012-2017.

Map 14 below shows:

- the spatial extent of where there are vacant sites that could have a dwelling erected on them
- developed sites where additional development/subdivision can occur or the Waitākere Ranges Heritage Overlay Subdivision Schedule applies. This overlay provides specific provision for additional subdivision.

Overall approximately 1566 potential sites in the heritage area are provided for as shown in Table 24 above.

Map 14: Subdivision and development capacity enabled by the Auckland Unitary Plan (as of February 2018)



## 5.6 Suggestions for the future (2018 to 2023)

- Ensure Lidar and high resolution aerial photography is available in time to enable analysis of the change for the next state of the environment report.
- While the number of resource consents has generally declined from 2012 to 2017, the planning framework has recently changed. Ongoing monitoring of subdivision and development under the Auckland Unitary Plan is required to determine if the same outcomes are being achieved in the next monitoring period.

## 5.7 Funding implications of activities

Funding will be required for the next Lidar and high resolution photography to be reflown.