



Waikatarua Local Area Plan



A Long Term Plan for the Character and Amenity of Waikatarua



Adopted 3 December 2009



The future of Waiatarua



The Waiatarua Local Area Plan presents the outcome of a series of conversations, meetings and workshops with members of the Waiatarua community and beyond.

The workshops and meetings held between November 2008 and May 2009 provided a chance for Council to listen to people about the kind of future they wanted for Waiatarua. The focus was on gathering and understanding people's ideas about the way the community looks and feels now and in the future. Their ideas and visions for the future have been further analysed and developed to form this Local Area Plan. Submissions were sought

and received on the proposed Local Area Plan between August and September 2009. This plan was adopted by the Council on 3 December 2009.

Conversations with members of the community identified the need to set long term goals to work towards. People wanted to avoid the creeping destruction of character by being able to deal with cumulative effects. They also wanted to retain the area's distinctive local identity and its natural forest setting.

The Local Area Plan will guide the actions that help to achieve the desired future for Waiatarua. The council will make changes to other Plans - those parts of the Local

Area Plan relating to resource management matters will be introduced into the District Plan through a plan change process, and those matters relating to services and facilities will be introduced into the Long Term Council Community Plan and Annual Plans. Community-led actions to implement the LAP are encouraged.

If you have any questions please email ranges@waitakere.govt.nz or call Lorraine Maguire on 836 8000 extn 8447.





1. Purpose of the Local Area Plan



Section 25(1) of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act (2008) (the Act) provides for the preparation and adoption by the council of a Local Area Plan for a local area that is within its district and the heritage area.

Waiatarua is a special place within the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area (Heritage Area). It is a special place to live, being nestled into the forested Waitakere Ranges.

Waiatarua has regionally significant landscapes and a unique character which can be threatened by cumulative one-off decisions by individuals and public agencies resulting in irreversible loss of its valued forested character and amenity.

Conversations with the community revealed a willingness to act now to prevent 'unintended' loss of amenity, and in the longer term to strengthen, build on, and capitalise on those unique attributes that result from Waiatarua's location, history and character. These make up the foundation for Waiatarua's environmental and landscape quality, economic, social and community wellbeing and stability.

Importantly there is an understanding that the threats are from both public and private actions and that agreed

and well articulated goals and plans can contribute to avoiding loss and degradation of amenity and guide this community to secure its desired future.

The proposed Waiatarua Local Area Plan (LAP) has been prepared to promote the purpose of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008 (the Act) and its objectives. The LAP will inform decision making processes related to the Waiatarua area by establishing long-term objectives in respect of the area's future amenity, character, and environment.

The essence of the LAP is that together we can imagine, plan and influence the future. A LAP is about thinking long term, in generations rather than years. The LAP:

- defines the local area and identifies the extent and nature of the heritage features existing in that area.
- seeks to identify what should be protected and enhanced to hand on to future generations.
- outlines how the objectives of the Act will be promoted in Waiatarua and identifies the distinctive

natural, cultural, and physical qualities and characteristics of the area that contribute to its long-term amenity. As a guide, the expression 'long-term' is taken to mean beyond a period of 50 years and the LAP seeks to establish the elements and outcomes that should be expected in that future.

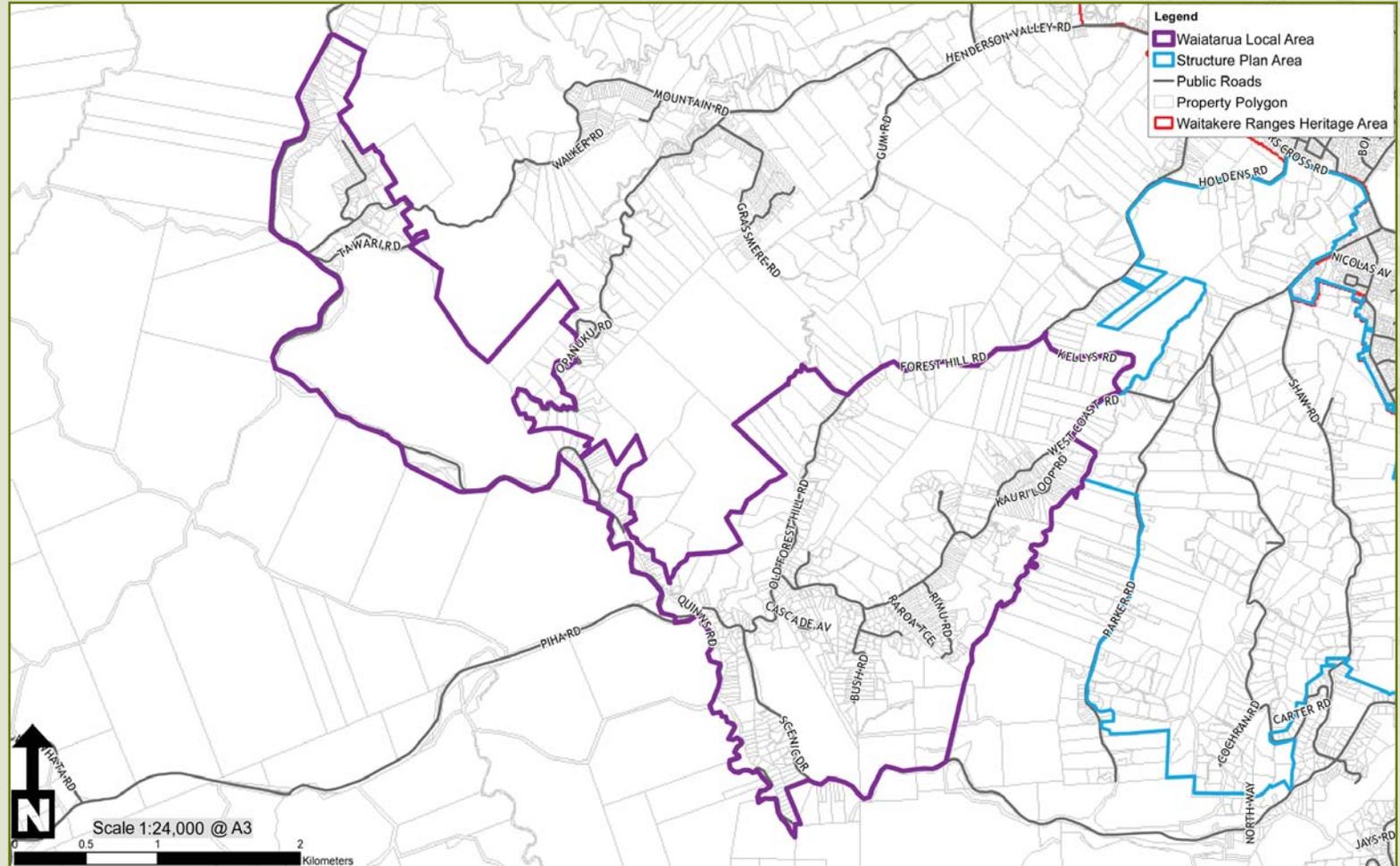
- provides certainty to the community by establishing objectives and policies to inform decision making in relation to the amenity, character, and the environment of Waiatarua.
- defines the future that is desired so that decisions can be made about whether activities and proposals contribute to or detract from the achievement of that desired future.
- provides a goal-orientated approach to managing adverse effects, particularly cumulative effects, and
- identifies issues relating to the provision of future services in Waiatarua.



2. Local Area Plan Boundary

Section 25(3) of the Act. A LAP must— (a) define the local area to which the LAP applies

The Waiatarua LAP, its description of the future character and amenity, and its objectives apply to the area identified in the map adjacent. The boundary of the LAP is based on consultation with the people of Waiatarua and beyond, and guidance from the Act. It distinguishes Waiatarua from adjoining local areas in the Heritage Area, including Oratia and Henderson Valley/ Opanuku. For more details on how the proposed boundary has been determined refer appendix B (www.waitakere.govt.nz).



Waiatarua Local Area Plan Boundary

3. Heritage Features



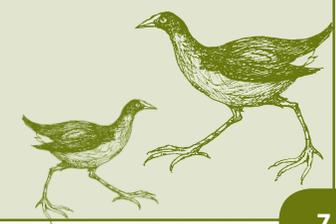
Section 25(3) of the Act. A LAP must— (b) identify the extent and nature of the heritage features existing in the local area

The Background Reports on the Foothills and Waiaatarua form part of the LAP (Appendix C and D - refer www.waitakere.govt.nz) and identify the extent and nature of the heritage features that exist in Waiaatarua.

The heritage features are valued because of the contribution they make to the regional, national and local significance of the Waiaatarua area and the Heritage Area as a whole.

Summary of the valued Heritage Features of Waiaatarua

- *The terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of prominent indigenous character.* This comprises large continuous areas of regenerating rainforest with intact ecological areas. The forested areas are landscapes of regional and national significance, have natural scenic beauty and include areas of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. The forest and streams have intrinsic value and provide a diversity of habitats for indigenous flora and fauna, have national biodiversity significance and are recognised as outstanding.
- *The natural landforms and landscapes that contrast and connect with each other, and which collectively give the area its distinctive character.* This comprises the ridgelines, steep slopes of the upper foothills, valleys and ravines. The landscapes include the last vestiges of rural farming activities, sparsely settled areas and the dominant forested areas. These contribute to the dramatic landform of the Ranges and foothills, which is the visual backdrop to metropolitan Auckland, forming its western skyline.
- *The naturally functioning Oratia and Opanuku Streams and their tributaries which originate in the Waitakere Ranges.* The streams have not been dammed for water supply purposes and contribute positively to downstream ecology, urban character, stormwater management, and flood protection.
- *The quietness and darkness of the Waitakere Ranges.* Low levels of street lighting, low density settlement and houses screened by vegetation contribute to a relatively dark night sky and a sense of sparse settlement.
- *Wilderness experiences, wildness, recreation, and relaxation* are provided by a network of tracks and viewing areas associated with the Regional Park and Scenic Drive.
- *The transition and buffer provided by the foothills from metropolitan Auckland and the forested ranges and coast.* Waiaatarua sits within the forested Ranges and is part of the transition from metropolitan Auckland, through rural Oratia and Opanuku/Henderson Valley to the forested Ranges.
- *The subservience of the built environment to the area's natural and rural landscape.* This is reflected in the distinctive amenity of the low-density residential areas that are located in regenerating (and increasingly dominant) forest settings adjoining the forested core of the Waitakere Ranges. Buildings are nestled into the forested landscape. The proportion of built area to forest is very small with little potential for further development or subdivision.
- *The historical, traditional, and cultural relationships of people, communities, and tangata whenua with the area and their exercise of kaitiakitanga and stewardship.* These include Maori and European historical relationships and those of the existing community with the area.
- *Evidence of past human activities, including those in relation to timber extraction, gum digging, flax milling, mineral extraction, intensive farming and orcharding.* The upper foothills are rich in archaeological sites, historic structures and historical botanic sites.
- *The distinctive community.* Waiaatarua is a distinctive place with its low density dispersed settlement spread out as a ribbon along the ridgelines of the Waitakere Ranges.
- *The Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and its importance as an accessible public place with significant natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources.*
- *The public water supply catchment,* which small parts of Waiaatarua drains to.





4. Character and amenity of Waiaatarua



Section 25(2) of the Act. The purpose of a LAP is to— (a) promote the purpose of this Act and the objectives and (b) provide objectives (particularly long term objectives) in relation to— (i) the future amenity, character, and environment of the local area to which the LAP applies and (ii) the wellbeing of the local community within that area (including its economic and social wellbeing) ...

Section 25(3) of the Act. A LAP must— (d) identify the distinctive natural, cultural, or physical qualities or characteristics of the local area that contribute to the local area's long term— (i) pleasantness or aesthetic coherence or (ii) cultural or recreational attributes

The Waiaatarua LAP defines the future character and amenity of the Waiaatarua area, in order to establish a long-term goals of how the community should look and feel in 50 or 100 years time. In this way, the LAP provides the basis for evaluating whether actions, proposals or activities contribute to or detract from the achievement of that desired future, and for assessing any adverse effects on character and amenity.

Why does 'amenity' matter?

Amenity in simple terms relates to those aspects of an area such as housing, open space, and recreational and leisure activities which make it an attractive place to live. In the Resource Management Act, the term 'amenity values' is used to describe those parts of the environment that constitute the natural and physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to peoples' appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes. The term embraces both natural elements such as forests, streams and landforms, and human-made elements, such as hedgerows, land uses, buildings and roads. It also includes the arrangement or disposition of those things, their design, prominence and effect on the landscape.

In making decisions about the use of land and resources under the Resource Management Act, consideration must be given to the adverse effects that an activity might have on the environment, including amenity.

Statement of Waiaatarua's Existing Character and Amenity

The existing character and amenity of Waiaatarua is defined by the following distinctive qualities:

1. Heart of the Waitakere Ranges

Waiaatarua is located in the heart of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area. The western and southern edge of Waiaatarua is bounded by large continuous areas of primary and regenerating indigenous rainforest, the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and the public water supply catchments. By contrast, the eastern edge is bounded by the orchards and farms of Oratia and Opanuku/Henderson Valley.

2. Landscape

The area is a landscape of national and regional significance. It has outstanding scenic beauty, and forms the dramatic visual backdrop to metropolitan Auckland. It has outstanding views from its elevated

location to metropolitan Auckland, the Waitemata Harbour and the Waitakere Ranges.

There are two distinct bands of landscape in Waiaatarua:

- The 'core ranges' – the ridgelines, steep slopes, valleys and ravines of the bush-clad core of the Waitakere Ranges. Here the continuous areas of indigenous vegetation are extensive and markedly dominant, including areas of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. Much of the main ridge line in Waiaatarua along the Scenic Drive is identified as 'sensitive ridgeline' in the Waitakere District Plan.
- The Upper Eastern Foothills – contain many of the characteristics of the core ranges, but development within the forest clad slopes is more extensive. This area includes moderate to gently rolling landform around the upper valleys. Native forest on the higher slopes extends down stream sides, giving way to rolling pastoral land associated with the rural areas of Oratia and Henderson Valley.



4. Character and amenity of Waatarua CONTINUED

3. Natural Environment

Waatarua is dominated by terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of prominent indigenous character. Waatarua's ecosystems are of national significance and comprise a rich diversity of indigenous flora and fauna. The forests contribute to carbon sequestration.

The topography of Waatarua is rolling to steep, including deeply dissected valleys and ravines that are potentially unstable, several streams and numerous water courses. The forested areas assist in maintaining the stability of the landform. The naturally functioning Oratia and Opanuku Streams have intrinsic value and provide a diversity of habitats for indigenous flora and fauna.

Waatarua has a high rainfall, which increases with altitude. Clouds and mist blanket the area during inclement days.

4. Building, Infrastructure and Activities

Waatarua's form of residential living is a rare and scarce feature in the region. Residents desire to live in close proximity to nature, for tranquility, quiet, privacy and the views. Residents enjoy both the proximity to, and the relative remoteness from metropolitan Auckland.

Waatarua is a distinctive low density residential community with a form based on a pattern of lots falling away from the ridgeline with building and development concentrated, ribbon-like, along the forested ridgelines. This leaves continuous and expansive areas of rainforest on the slopes, valleys and ravines.

The area has a sparse and spread out population, with parts of the community separated a considerable distance from one another by the forest, Regional Park and landform.

Buildings are subservient to the natural landscape, being nestled into the regenerating and increasingly dominant forest setting and generally obscured from the road by vegetation.

Amenity at the individual property level is characterised by a strong sense of privacy and remoteness from neighbours, with the forest restricting views from public places into properties – 'looking out rather than in'.

The public amenity of the area is based on the expansive views from Scenic Drive, panoramic views into the area from metropolitan Auckland and contained views along the roads running along the ridgelines.

Sites are partially self-servicing with no reticulated wastewater infrastructure. Roads are located on ridgelines and are generally winding, without formal concrete kerb, gutters or footpaths. There are low levels of street lighting and a relatively dark night sky. These attributes contribute to a sense of sparse settlement.

There is an absence of urban-scale activities in Waatarua. Many residents work from home.

5. Community facilities.

Waatarua has a good range of community facilities and places to meet, partly as a consequence of its location along the route to the west coast beaches. Community facilities include the fire station, hall, playcentre and library, meeting places such as a café and visitor and accommodation facilities.

4. Character and amenity of Waiaatarua CONTINUED



Statement of Waiaatarua's Future Character and Amenity

Based on the existing character and amenity of Waiaatarua, the community has identified a desired future where Waiaatarua should generally remain the same as it is now, with very little change other than the continued growth of the forest. This statement of the desired future for Waiaatarua will be used to evaluate and guide development and activities in the area by both public and private landowners.

1. Maintaining the forested character

The character and amenity of Waiaatarua will continue to be derived from retaining its dominant forested character, scenic beauty, quiet, darkness and sense of enclosure.

Infill subdivision and development, beyond that provided in the District Plan (Operative 2003), will be avoided to maintain a low density residential community. Buildings will be nestled within and be subservient to the natural landscape in a manner consistent and compatible with existing patterns of development.

2. Restoring the environment

The forests will increase in prominence and quality. The number and extent of weeds and pests will be reduced through active management.

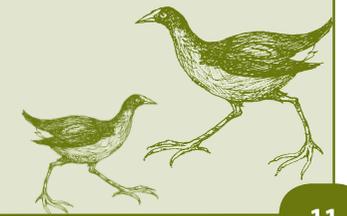
Heritage buildings and sites will be protected, reused, restored, enhanced and celebrated.

3. Working from home

Waiaatarua will continue to have a high proportion of residents working from home, drawn to the lifestyle and high speed telecommunications. Business activities will be based around existing facilities, with other small-scale home-based activities related to the area's outstanding beauty and recreation value.

4. Valuing community facilities

The Waiaatarua community will continue to value, maintain and enhance existing community facilities.





5. The Waiaatarua objectives, policies and actions



Section 25(3) of the Act. A LAP must — (c) state how it is intended that the objectives in section 8 will be promoted in relation to the local area. Section 25(3) of the Act. A LAP must— (e) state policies and objectives in relation to the amenity, character, and environment of the local area. Section 25(4) of the Act. A LAP may identify issues relating to the provision of future services in the local area to which the LAP applies.

The Act is promoted through the identification of: the heritage features; the definition of existing and future character and amenity; and the introduction of the Waiaatarua objectives, policies and actions.

These objectives, policies and actions establish how valued elements of Waiaatarua’s existing character and amenity will be recognised protected, restored and enhanced and how the desired future character and amenity is to be achieved.

It is not intended that the Council will be the only

party implementing the objectives, policies and actions. They need to be promoted in a manner that encourages everyone to own them. The community are encouraged to consider further actions that may be appropriate to achieve the desired future character and amenity for Waiaatarua.

O. WAIATARUA LOCAL AREA PLAN OBJECTIVES	P. POLICIES	A. ACTIONS TO PROMOTE THE OBJECTIVES
<p>Heritage Features, Character, Amenity and Environment</p> <p>O1 Recognise the contribution that the heritage features of Waiaatarua make to the national significance of the Waitakere Ranges and foothills, and to the future amenity, character and environment of Waiaatarua; and to the wellbeing of the Waiaatarua community; and to that end protect, restore and enhance:</p>	<p>P1. Include in relevant statutory documents significant findings from the Waiaatarua Local Area Plan.</p> <p>P2. Implement all the objectives, policies and actions of this Plan to give effect to the future character and amenity statement.</p>	<p>A1. Introduce a plan change to include those matters in the LAP relating to a resource management purpose in the District Plan.</p> <p>A2. Identify and include matters relating to the maintenance and provision of services in Annual Plans and the Long Term Council Community Plan.</p> <p>A3. Evaluate the LAP process as a contribution to planning within the new planning framework for Auckland.</p>
<p>O1.1 its terrestrial and aquatic eco-systems of a prominent indigenous character.</p>	<p>P3. Identify and make available to the public, information about the extent, character and quality of indigenous vegetation and habitats of Waiaatarua, and its conservation and enhancement needs.</p> <p>P4. Avoid any further loss of significant areas of indigenous vegetation and indigenous habitat.</p> <p>P5. Restore and enhance areas of indigenous vegetation and indigenous habitat.</p>	<p>A4. Complete an inventory and assessment of existing terrestrial and aquatic indigenous habitats of Waiaatarua.</p> <p>A5. Promote the formal protection of significant natural areas on private land through Heritage Area Covenants or other mechanisms.</p> <p>A6. Restore significant natural areas, to provide habitat, corridors and linkages.</p> <p>A7. Develop and co-ordinate programmes of Council action, community action, and landowner action to achieve weed and pest management and destruction.</p> <p>A8. Identify and protect species that are endemic to the Heritage Area or locally rare or endangered.</p> <p>A9. Monitor the extent and quality of ecosystems.</p> <p>A10. Advocate for a dedicated Heritage Area chapter in the Auckland Regional Pest Management Plan to integrate landowner, volunteer and council initiatives.</p>

5. The Waiaatarua objectives, policies and actions CONTINUED

O. WAIATARUA LOCAL AREA PLAN OBJECTIVES	P. POLICIES	A. ACTIONS TO PROMOTE THE OBJECTIVES
O1.2 the natural and dramatic landforms and landscapes.	P6. To reinforce the landscape provisions of the District Plan.	
O1.3 the naturally functioning streams and their margins.	P7. Identify and make available to the public information about the extent, character and quality of the naturally functioning streams and their margins. P8. Avoid adverse effects on naturally functioning streams and their margins. P9. Protect, restore and enhance the values of natural streams, including riparian vegetation.	A11. Establish water quality targets for the Oratia and Opanuku Streams and their tributaries. A12. Monitor and report on water quality and habitat condition. A13. Establish a Ranges Neighbourhood Initiative (or similar) in Waiaatarua to promote weed and pest control.
O1.4 opportunities for wilderness and recreation experiences close to metropolitan Auckland.	P10. Map development proposals for heritage trails, and prepare inventory of interpretation for areas outside the Regional Park. P11. Develop access trail networks outside of the Regional Park in association with landowners. P12. Identify and maintain public and roadside lookouts and view shafts. P13. Recognise that careful consideration of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems is required in the maintenance and/or development of a trail network.	A14. Design, locate and install visitor amenity, signage and interpretation systems. A15. In order to improve the quality of the wilderness experience and the scenic recreation opportunity, identify lookouts from Scenic Drive that should be maintained. A16. Review the access routes associated with heavy vehicles in Oratia and Waiaatarua.
O1.5 a built environment that is subservient to the natural character and landscape. O1.6 its quietness and darkness. O1.7 its role as a buffer to and transition from metropolitan Auckland to the forested ranges and coast	P14. Take a precautionary approach to subdivision and development that could irreversibly damage the area's heritage features or that detracts from, or undermines the achievement of the desired future character and amenity for Waiaatarua.	
O1.8 the historical, traditional, cultural relationships of people, communities and Tangata Whenua with the area. O1.9 the evidence of past human activities.	P15. Promote Waiaatarua's historic, traditional, and cultural relationships of people, communities and Tangata Whenua.	A17. Establish heritage trails based on Waiaatarua's cultural heritage. A18. Establish Pou to recognise Tangata Whenua associations with Waiaatarua. A19. Identify and protect cultural heritage. A20. Include statement from Tangata Whenua in the Character and Amenity statement and associated District Plan Change. A21. Following further consultation with directly affected landowners, consider a plan change to include identified built and cultural sites, for heritage protection within the District Plan. A22. Assess archaeological sites for potential inclusion for heritage protection within the District Plan.

5. The Waiaatarua objectives, policies and actions CONTINUED



O. WAIATARUA LOCAL AREA PLAN OBJECTIVES	P. POLICIES	A. ACTIONS TO PROMOTE THE OBJECTIVES
O1.10 the relationship with the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park.	P16. Have regard to the current Regional Parks Management Plan.	A23. Promote incentives for formal protection of land outside the Regional Park that is biologically or recreationally important.
O1.11 the features of the area that relate to its water supply catchment.		
O2. Wellbeing To provide for the well-being of the Waiaatarua community, including its social and economic well-being	P17. Maintain a neighbourhood-scale focal point based on community facilities. P18. Enable and support opportunities for working from home based on small scale business enterprises. P19. Enable recreational activities that are compatible with, and sympathetic to, the natural environment and amenity values.	A24. Introduce signage to identify the transition to the Waiaatarua community. A25. Advocate for high speed telecommunications upgrades in Waiaatarua. A26. Where footpaths are not available, work toward the maintenance of areas of roadside grass berms that allow comfortable pedestrian use.
O3. Subdivision, Development and Character O3.1 To recognise that, in protecting the area's character, amenity and heritage features, Waiaatarua has little capacity to absorb further subdivision. O3.2 To ensure that any subdivision or development in Waiaatarua, of itself or in respect of its cumulative effect: (i) is of an appropriate character, scale and intensity to retain the natural character and landscapes; and (ii) maintains a low density community; and (iii) does not adversely affect the area's heritage features; and (iv) does not contribute to urban sprawl; and (v) achieves the future character and amenity statement.	P20. Use the definition of future character and amenity as goals to avoid cumulative adverse effects on natural character and landscapes. P21. Retain existing District Plan subdivision controls to avoid further infill. P22. Avoid development which establishes reticulated wastewater infrastructure. P23. Avoid urban scale transport infrastructure in Waiaatarua.	A27. Review the codes of practice to provide for bush living standards to maintain the existing character, and ensure these standards or criteria are reflected in the District Plan. A28. Extend codes of practice to reinforce the Local Area Plan policy. A29. Ensure that dwellings and ancillary buildings are setback sufficiently from the road and include landscaping where necessary to fully or partially obscure built development from the road.
O4. Implementation To be active in the implementation and communication of the Local Area Plan.	P24. Improve the ability to manage landowner relationships with Council. P25. Support the creation of a community-based advocacy group, or support existing community groups to implement aspects of the Local Area Plan.	A30. Prepare an implementation and funding plan for the local area plan to contribute towards Annual Plans and Long Term Council Community Plans.



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