

RDC making a positive difference

RODNEY DISTRICT COUNCIL RURAL STRATEGY

Adopted September 2010



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Rural Strategy is a long term (25 year) outcome focused strategy, the purpose of which is to:

- foster a sustainable rural economy;
- protect and enhance rural landscapes and rural character;
- improve rural development outcomes for communities and the environment;
- protect the future benefits of un-built areas and open space;
- manage settlement edges and green belts in the District

Strategy Inputs and Research

Important rural resources and values in Rodney district's rural areas have been analysed to help identify the issues to be addressed in this Rural Strategy. These studies include a study of the rural economy, an analysis of rural landscapes, a study of the lifestyle preferences of rural land owners, an analysis of how much subdivision can be undertaken under the current rules and where this is likely to be located. The objectives of the district plan have also been compared with the outcomes on the ground, including an analysis of key features of the current approach to environmental management.

Focus Issues

The collection of information, consultation with an external Rural Strategy Reference Group and the Council's own experience with resource management issues, has resulted in the identification of (in no particular order) the following key focus issues that the Rural Strategy needs to address:

- 1) The amount of subdivision opportunity and its associated effects
- 2) Threats to the sustainability and productivity of the rural economy
- 3) Development and environmental outcomes not matching expectations
- 4) Impacts of rates policy and regulations
- 5) Dis-benefits of a subdivision for environmental conservation approach
- 6) Sporadic location of development and the effects associated with it
- 7) Overly general approach to environmental management
- 8) The need to acknowledge and support local identity.
- 9) Development resulting in additional pressure on infrastructure including roads
- 10) Potential loss of biodiversity and impacts on coastal areas through development pressures

Strategic Imperatives

The process of developing responses has identified a number of **“strategic imperatives”**. These imperatives are outcomes that the Rural Strategy responses (in addressing the focus issues) are driving towards:

- Viable productive land – for farming, horticulture viticulture, forestry and other primary production enterprises
- Quality landscapes – a country look and feel and quality development
- Quality environments –well preserved and protected natural environments
- Supporting strong viable communities – by supporting local cultural heritage and by providing efficient and effective infrastructure
- A range of lifestyle choices
- Well managed utility functions
- Well managed recreation functions.

Using the “broad brush” approach in Planning Rodney as a base, the Rural Strategy develops a number sub-areas (environments) and feature overlays in order to achieve the strategic imperatives.

Making the Strategy Work

The new Auckland Council is required to prepare a Spatial Plan for Auckland, which will guide the Council's LTCCP, its infrastructure investment plans, its statutory plans under the Resource Management Act and other policies.

The Rural Strategy is intended to place the new Auckland Council in a strong position where, when making its Spatial plan, it will have at its disposal:

- a good knowledge of the issues facing rural Rodney;
- the strategic imperatives identified by the Rodney community;
- a series of policy measures which if taken, will address the issues and achieve the imperatives.

Specific Initiatives

A set of meaningful responses to these issues would require collaboration between communities and the Council as well as a range of actions across the Council:

- Putting out a suite of District Plan changes (or a single major rural plan change) picking up and developing the intent and direction of the ideas in the non-statutory Rural Strategy and giving them legal effect;
- Organisation alignment e.g. development contributions regime; rating policy; expenditure on roads, wastewater, street infrastructure and other services;
- Input into the Region's Spatial Plan;
- Further research such as structure planning more detailed landscape analysis;
- Partnering initiatives with land owner, community and business groups.



2. CONSULTING ON THE DRAFT STRATEGY

Public Consultation on the Draft Rural Strategy begins on 20 May 2010 and ended on 21 June 2010.

Copies of the Draft Rural Strategy were available for public inspection at the Council's offices at: 50 Centreway Road, Orewa; Baxter Street, Warkworth; State Highway 16, Huapai; and Commercial Road, Helensville; and at all public libraries in Rodney District.

Information on the Rural Strategy including copies of the background research and an electronic questionnaire to make brief comments on the Draft Strategy, were available on the Council website at <http://www.rodney.govt.nz/haveyoursay>. A CD containing the Draft Rural Strategy and the background research documents was available to be sent out on request.

Open days on the draft Rural Strategy (with information about the strategy and a staff member able to answer questions) were held at :

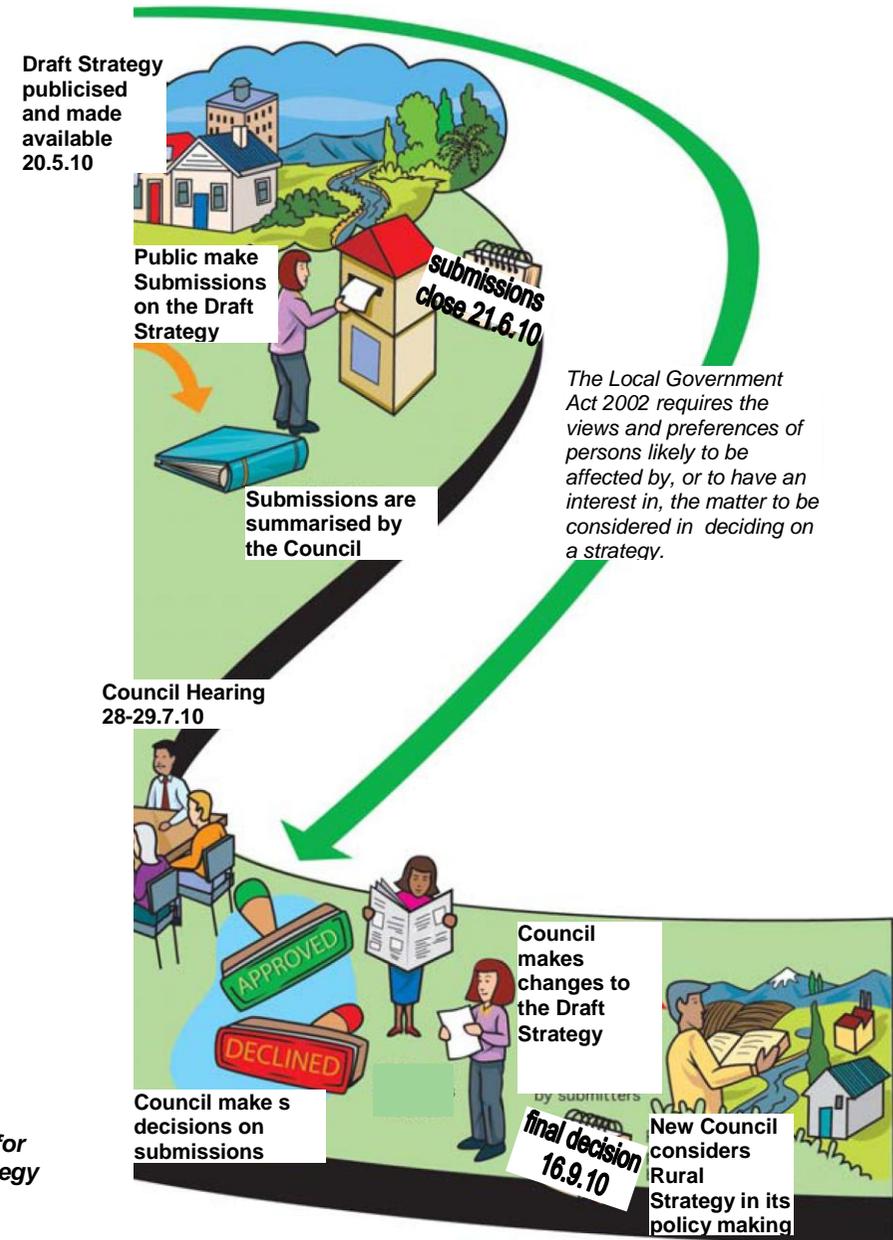
- the Warkworth Masonic Lodge on Tuesday 25 May from 4.00 pm – 7.30 pm
- the Helensville service centre on Thursday 27 May from 4.00 pm – 7.30pm
- the Orewa Council Offices on Wednesday 2 June from 4.00 pm – 7.00 pm

Any person was able to make a submission in support of, or in opposition to, any aspect of the Draft Rural Strategy. The submission period ran from 20 May 2010, and closed on 21 June 2010. Feedback forms were available at each of the Council's offices and on the Council website www.rodney.govt.nz.

Any district plan change that develops as a result of the Rural Strategy will have to be prepared, publicly notified and adopted in accordance with the legal requirements of the RMA 1991, which include a formal submission process, a hearing process and an opportunity to appeal to an independent Court.

Enquiries relating to the Rural Strategy should, in the first instance be made to Sue Healy at the Rodney District Council, Environmental Policy and Planning Department, Centreway Road, Orewa, (telephone 0800 426 5169).

Figure 1. Diagram explaining the process for consulting on and adopting the Rural Strategy



3. BASIS OF THE RURAL STRATEGY

3.1 Reasons for the Rural Strategy

The rural strategy is intended to guide planning in rural Rodney in a way that allows a wide range of rural activities to take place while at the same time preserving the things that make this place special for those who live in it, those who visit it and those who use it for their livelihoods.

Rural Rodney is a highly diverse area with expansive pastoral farms, commercial production forests, pristine bush, sweeping open coasts, dunes, estuarine areas, wetlands, lakes and scrub and shrubland areas, wine production, orchards, cropping, glasshouses, restaurants, tourist attractions, country homes, villages of various different sizes and character and thousands of lifestyle blocks. Each of these elements and the growth pressures and the changes that are underway in rural Rodney present particular issues that need to be provided for in a coordinated way to be managed successfully.

For many years the bulk of the rural area has had a General Rural zoning enabling farming to continue without undue restriction and making it quite difficult to establish non-agricultural uses despite the inevitability that such uses will seek and in some cases require rural locations. In response to rural lifestyle demands, countryside living zones have been identified in the current District Plan and these have accommodated a percentage of people seeking this lifestyle choice. However, these zones have not met all demand for countryside living and the General Rural area has and is undergoing a dramatic change from productive farming to lifestyle blocks. Rules allowing subdivision in return for protecting or enhancing the natural environment have been widely used.



These approaches have brought problems such as the widespread proliferation of protected natural areas in return for subdivision opportunities. These are often in isolated areas and have produced limited real benefits while key quality natural areas remain unprotected. Even where bushlots or wetlands are protected, the resulting trade off subdivisions can work against the protection of rural values in other ways. Tensions between lifestylers seeking quiet pristine rural environments and farmers and other business activities trying to make a living from rural production are also evident. Environmental outcomes in the rural area are falling short of expectations.

3.2 Purpose

The Rural Strategy will take account of this diverse and dynamic area and will assist the rural community to:

- manage likely tensions between different activities and defines expected outcomes;
- acknowledge demand from urban Auckland for rural lifestyle use and “urban” uses but manage this carefully in all respects including location and quality;
- optimise the natural environment, protecting what is most important while promoting a working productive rural area;

The purpose of the Rural Strategy is to set a long term (25 year) direction for dealing with Rodney’s rural areas by:

- fostering a strong rural economy;
- protecting and enhance the district’s country look and feel;
- achieving high quality rural development and environmental outcomes;
- providing opportunities for compatible rural lifestyle choices, and recreational activities;
- recognising the use of local and regional un-built areas and open space resources;
- managing and fostering the role and growth of strong rural communities and villages.

3.3 Process

The process of developing the Rural Strategy has involved the following steps:

- 1) **research** and analysis of important aspects of rural areas in the district and what's happening in them including a survey of rural lifestyle preferences, a rural economy study and an analysis of rural landscapes;
- 2) **review results** of the current District Plan approach, both good and bad, including what continuing current approaches into the future would mean;
- 3) **meaningful engagement** with people representing relevant rural interests at key stages during the preparation of the strategy through a Rural Strategy Reference Group (RSRG), and consultation workshops with Councillors, Iwi and others;
- 4) **translating the visioning** in long term strategic documents such as Vision Rodney, Planning Rodney, A Living Vision for Rodney's Economy and the Auckland Regional Growth Strategy into stages of detailed actions including framing of future District Plan changes;
- 5) **addressing the statutory context** for planning: the Local Government Act 2002, the Resource Management Act 1991 and other plans under these pieces of legislation.

3.4 Background Research

A detailed summary of background research undertaken as part of the Rural Strategy has been brought together in the RDC Summary Background Issues Paper, October 2009.

This strategy has been based on a current and locally specific body of knowledge about landcover, site sizes, demographic trends, subdivision trends, settlement patterns, traffic volumes and trip making, complaints data, land use trends, employment data, land value changes, bushlot monitoring, and Environment Court Decisions and other lessons from the long process of the 2000 District Plan review.

Part of the background research involved identifying the various physical resources of the rural areas in the District. Through a desktop analysis of a range of data sets using the Council's geographic information system (GIS), a series of map layers (**Figure 2**) have been developed to assist in understanding the resources and values that make up the rural area.

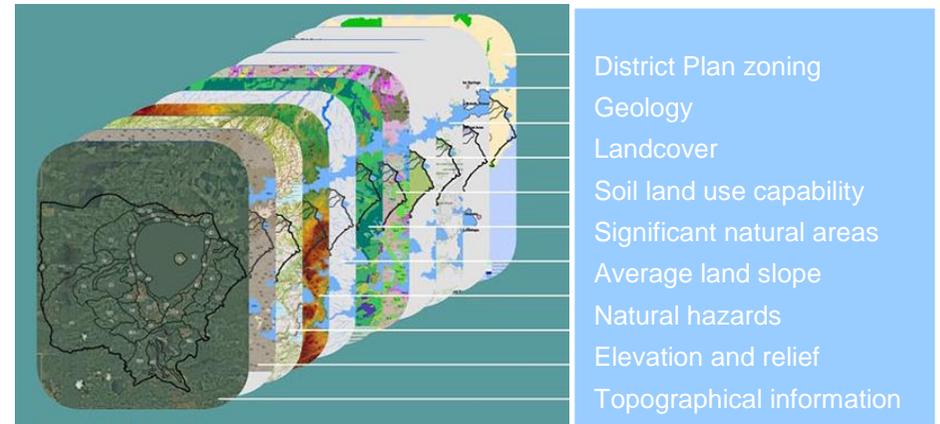


Figure 2 GIS Layers

Adding to the Council's information and knowledge, a series of studies were also commissioned from independent consultants. This work is summarised in the Summary Background Issues Paper but is also available in full from within the Rural Strategy Council's Rural Strategy page on the Council website. Three key studies are:

Landscape Analysis of Rural Rodney, LA4 and O'Connor Planning Consultants 2009: a landscape assessment of the rural landscape of the district providing an assessment of the rural landscape – its amenity values, its rural character, the natural character of the coastal environment and the varying components that make up the 'country look and feel' of the district.

Rural Residential Lifestyle Preferences A Report for Rodney District Council, Nexus Planning and Research 2008: a study of the lifestyle preferences and concerns of 783 current property owners in the rural areas of Rodney using focus groups and an online survey.

Rodney District Rural Economy & Lifestyle Block Trend Study, Property Economics 2009: an analysis of the district's rural economy, its issues and key drivers, prospects, opportunities and threats. It studied demographic, employment and land value trends, trends in agriculture the rural visitor/tourism sector and lifestyle block demand issues. It involved a survey of 17 long term businesses in the district and looked at the effects on the economy from the loss of farming and increases in lifestyle block farming.

3.5 Influences

The Rural Strategy is influenced by a number of other strategic and statutory planning processes (Figure 3) that have been or are occurring and each of which sets important directions.

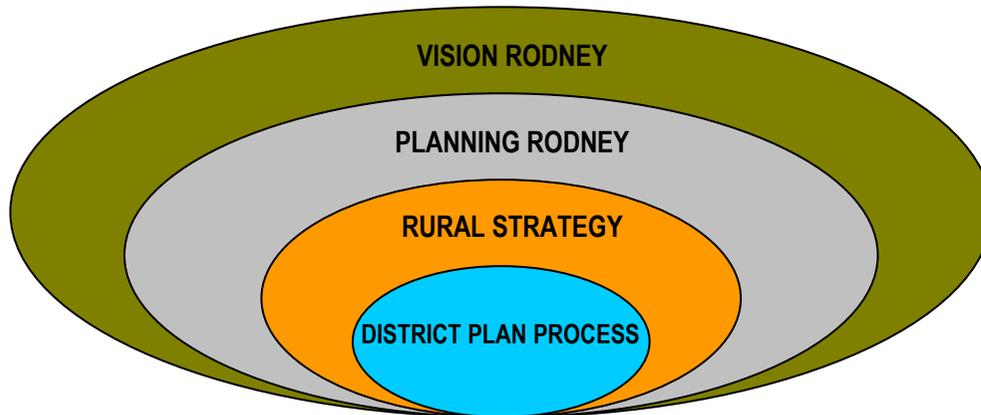


Figure 3: Influencing processes

The Strategy sits outside of the District Plan and should be used as a guiding document to inform future plan changes for the rural area. The Strategy considers spatially what is appropriate for the rural areas in Rodney and given that it is a high level strategic document, the concepts must be tested to determine whether they give effect to the Regional Policy Statement before they are utilised as the basis for any plan changes.

The Strategy has also been considered in light of new zones and activities within the boundary of neighbouring local authorities such as planned new employment areas in Westgate and the existing Albany developments. The Strategy has also taken into account similar strategic processes occurring within Franklin District, being the other rural Council that will form a part of the new Auckland Council.

Vision Rodney Direction

The 2008 update of Vision Rodney sets out a number of outcomes that the communities of Rodney want to achieve:

- To have a growing and resilient economy based on a wide variety of business that fit our character.
- To have a range of recreation and cultural facilities and events across the district and encourage creativity and diversity;

- To maintain and enhance the character of our townships and rural areas through excellent urban and rural planning and intelligent management of growth;
- To have the infrastructure and services needed for our residents, business and visitors;
- To have a sense of community and provide for the emotional and physical well-being of our people;
- To value, protect and enjoy the natural environment.

Structure Plans

A number of Structure Plans or community visions have been adopted by the Council and the relevant communities have had significant input into these documents. These structure plans have been completed for the following areas: Helensville/Parakai, Kawau Island, Kumeu/Huapai, Matakana, Omaha Flats, Point Wells, Muriwai, Orewa East and West, Riverhead, Sandspit, Snells Beach, Algies Bay, Silverdale North, Silverdale South, Waimauku, Waitoki, Warkworth, Wellsford and Whangaparaoa. A number of other structure plans are currently in process for Kaukapakapa, Silverdale West and Puhoi. It should be noted that this Strategy will not undermine the Structure Plans. The Strategy will feed into any future structure plans as a guiding document for the rural areas, similar to Vision Rodney or Planning Rodney.

Current District Plan Approach

The District Plan is intended to ensure “sustainable management” of the District’s natural and physical resources. It is a response to the requirements of national legislation and regional policy as well as the 1999 Rodney District Development Strategy. It has changed significantly in the process of becoming “operative” since its release in 2000 but still has the following obvious features:

- One General Rural zone applied to 86% of the rural land with particular controls on activities where they affect features such as water bodies.
- Emphasises maintenance and enhancement of rural character while recognising that change will occur.
- Low level controls on bush removal and earthworks outside of significant natural areas and water bodies. Subdivision incentives encourage protection of significant native bush and wetlands as well as planting out large areas for land rehabilitation virtually everywhere in the rural area.
- Emphasises managing the influence of metropolitan Auckland and demand for rural living. Countryside Living zones applied to 4% of the rural land, located around the periphery of particular towns and between Riverhead and Stillwater to absorb this demand.

basis of the rural strategy continued

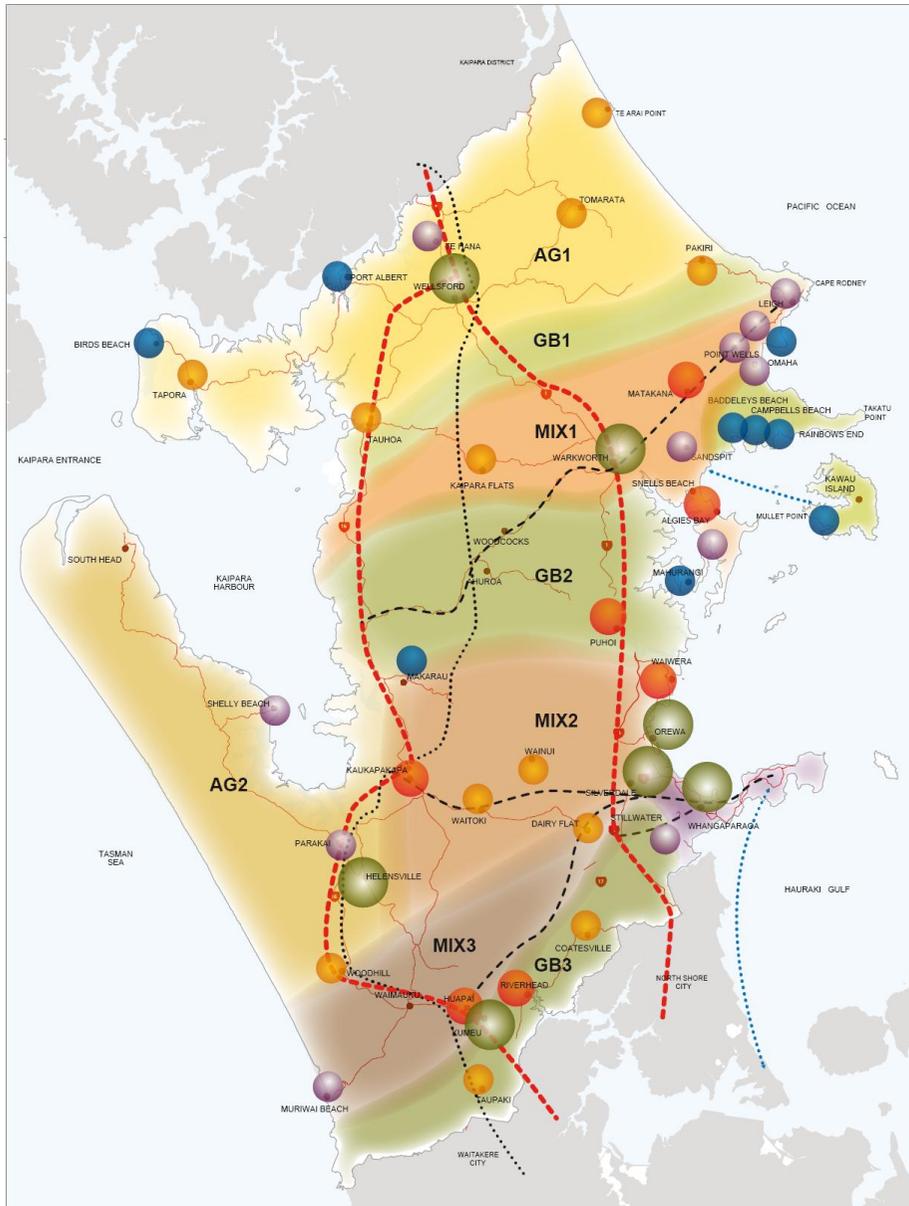


Figure 4. Strategic Spatial Elements diagram from Planning Rodney

- The protection of significant landscapes and in particular the special character of coastal areas through the application of character zones on 9% of the land which include more limiting controls on earthworks and bush removal and which require resource consent for the establishment of buildings.
- Enables rural production with farming and forestry generally permitted in most zones subject to various environmental controls. More intensive farming activities require resource consent.

The district plan submissions and appeals process and reviewing the plans outcomes has highlighted some key issues:

- A “blanket” of subdivision activity across almost all of the district outside of public land and forestry areas with associated issues of:
 - proliferation of small enhancement bush lots of low ecological value;
 - tensions between lifestyle and rural production activities;
 - degradation of some key features and landscapes;
 - pressures on roading infrastructure as a result of widespread lifestyle demands;
- Lack of opportunities for alternative forms of subdivision, which may offer better outcomes;
- A lack of flexibility for accommodating a range of non-farming activities that can locate in the rural areas with good outcomes;
- Excessive regulation of some aspects of rural production activity and an inadequate response to significant adverse effects with other aspects of rural production.

Planning Rodney Direction

Planning Rodney already recognises the diversity of rural Rodney and uses a “broad brush” approach to highlight different parts of the rural area. **(Figure 4)** This broad brush picture is not a rural strategy in itself but it does provide a good starting point for the Rural Strategy, using the Planning Rodney areas as base to develop a finer grain analysis.

The agricultural production areas **AG1** and **AG2** have a production and preservation focus with efforts directed at:

- removing avoidable obstacles to rural production
- preserving and supporting the existing rural lifestyle, but redirecting further lifestyle development elsewhere
- preserving and protecting the environment, and recognizing the sensitive coastal environments

basis of the rural strategy continued

- targeted infrastructure and community services provision on roading and community facilities such as halls, parks and reserves to support the rural community and facilitate the functioning of the rural economy.
- developing or strengthening planning controls, limiting widespread rural subdivision for non-production uses such as lifestyle residential activity.

The mixed rural activity belts **MIX1**, **MIX2** and **MIX3** have a facilitation and enhancement focus with efforts directed at:

- acknowledging the lifestyle residential function of these areas and the potential for lifestyle activity to 'lock in' a permanent and viable rural landscape that does not lend itself to urbanization once well established.
- acknowledging the intensive production role and does not unnecessarily limit or restrict it and allows for a variety and diversity of uses.
- striving to retain the country feel and experience of those living in and using these areas.
- protecting key environmental values.

The green buffers **GB1**, **GB2** and **GB3** have a strong preservation and enhancement focus. The approach will be one of balance – principally protecting these areas from degradation while still acknowledging that they are farmed, used for forestry and lived in by people seeking rural lifestyles.

This Rural Strategy looks in more detail at each area and sets the scene for particular policies and measures within each. Common approaches may apply to a number of rural areas. Some approaches may be specific to particular areas.

TUOH Settlement Act and Statutory Acknowledgments

The TUOH Settlement Act 2002 has resulted in Statutory Acknowledgments which are shown on the District Planning maps in the northern areas of the District. These statutory acknowledgments should be acknowledged through the rural strategy process.

3.6 Initial Consultation Feedback

A fundamental basis for developing the strategy has been an acknowledgement of the need in making good policy, to hear the views of those who live in, work in, and visit the district.

The Council attempted to survey a range of preferences and views of over 6,600 owners of rural properties from all over the Rodney District as a basic building block for the Rural Strategy, and over 780 residents participated in the survey and focus group discussions. This survey showed that rural planning and development involves issues about which people tend to hold divided and contrasting views.

A Rural Strategy Reference Group was formed to act as a sounding board and a reality check for the development of the Rural Strategy. This working party is made up of persons and representatives of groups and organisations with an active interest in rural issues in Rodney district. These community, industry and interest group representatives have said they want:

A diverse rural area with an emphasis on:

- continuing primary production.
- recognition of the lifestyle sector and service¹ sector.
- a strong resilient rural community.
- quality “no surprises” landscapes and environments.
- appropriate infrastructure in the right places.

appropriate rules, regulations and rating packages

¹ By this they mean a range of business enterprises serving the needs of tourists and the wider metropolitan population, such as shops, restaurants, hotels, motels, recreation facilities, markets and also quarries, landfills and utility sites.

3.7 Key Focus Issues

The rural area of Rodney District is large, varied and challenging in terms of the numbers and scale of issues raised by a Rural Strategy. The Rural Strategy cannot tackle all of these issues in detail. The following 8 issues have been determined as the key matters that the Rural Strategy must address to succeed.

- 1) The **amount of subdivision** opportunity and the effects associated with it
- 2) Threats to the sustainability and productivity of the **rural economy**
- 3) Development and environmental **outcomes not matching expectations**
- 4) Impacts of **rates policy and regulations**
- 5) Dis-benefits of **subdivision for environmental conservation** approach
- 6) Sporadic **location of development and the effects associated with it**
- 7) **Overly general** approach to environmental management
- 8) The need to acknowledge and support **local identity**
- 9) Development result in additional pressure on infrastructure including roads
- 10) Potential loss of biodiversity and impacts on coastal areas through development pressures

4. STRATEGIC RESPONSES TO THE ISSUES

4.1 Achieving strategic imperatives

Section 2 highlights the current situation in rural Rodney - what we have, the values we want preserved and the key issues we are facing.

The consultation process has identified things that people see as important - **what we want**. These could be called the “**strategic imperatives**.”

The imperatives identified are:

- **Viable productive land** – for farming, horticulture viticulture, forestry and other primary production enterprises
- **Quality landscapes** – a country look and feel and quality development
- **Quality environments** – well preserved and protected natural environments
- **Supporting strong viable communities** – by supporting local cultural heritage and by providing efficient and effective infrastructure.
- **A range of lifestyle choices**
- **A well managed utility² function**

The challenge is to find ways of achieving each strategic imperative – **how do we get it?**

Planning Rodney has already identified a number of different areas making up the rural area and suggests a “broad brush” strategic approach to each.

For the Rural Strategy we need to go to the next level of detail. The strategic approach is shown in **Figure 4**. It considers each of the “broad brush” Planning Rodney areas against the strategic imperatives, considering:

- What we have in each area – values and issues;
- What we want in each area;
- How do we get it – ways and means.

The next few pages set out the essence of the Rural Strategy, pointing to a set of tailored management approaches areas and accompanying “layers” which in combination will go towards achieving each of the seven strategic imperatives. The process of developing these initiatives from the Planning Rodney conceptual framework is summarised in **Figure 5**.

Some identified environments and areas are widespread, covering more than one Planning Rodney area – others are specific to particular parts of rural Rodney. The environments and layers point the way to a wide range of rules, incentives and measures that could be adopted into Council policies. These tools are considered in more detail in **Section 5**.

² The utility function describes the role Rural Rodney is inevitably asked to play in the region for mining of resources, the disposal of waste and cleanfill and the placement of utility sites and networks (power, water, wastewater and telecommunication sites and routes).

³ The recreation function describes the role Rural Rodney plays as a recreational playground for the region and beyond.

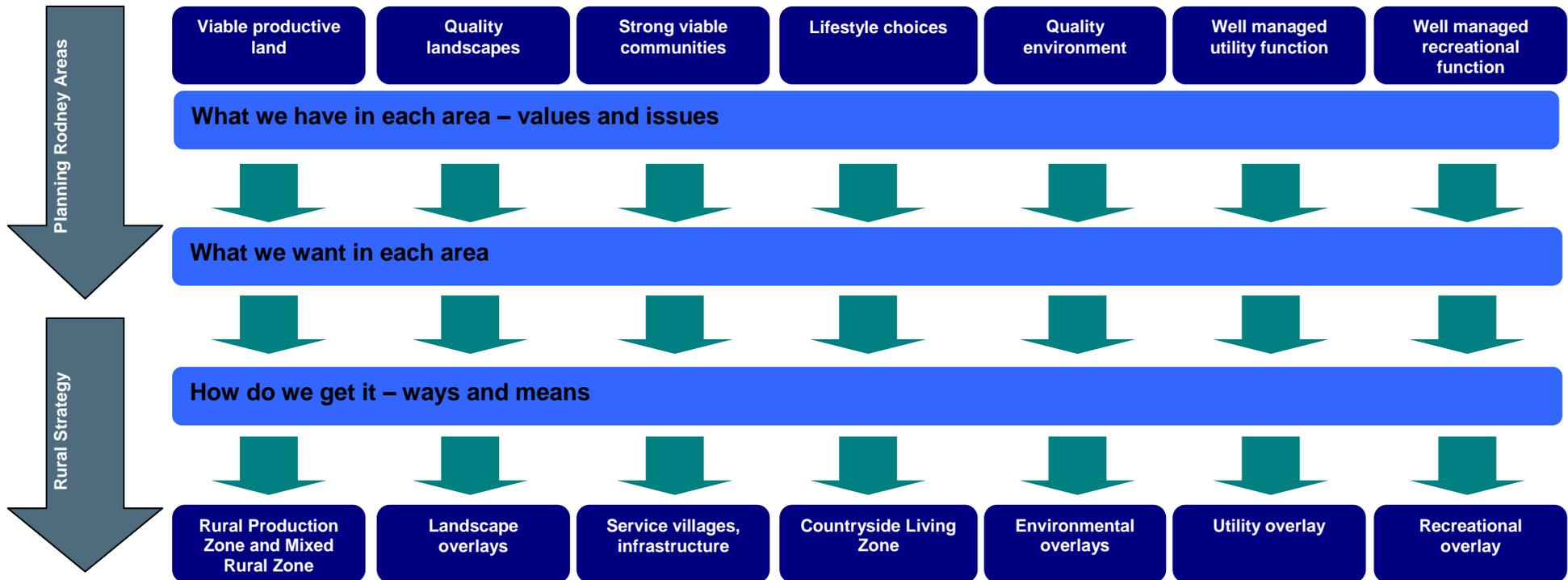


Figure 5. Relationship between Rural Strategy Initiatives and Planning Rodney Spatial Approach

ViabLe Productive Land

What we have?

A strong agricultural production sector

High levels of widespread lifestyle subdivision across the rural area, creating some tensions with the production sector

Villages throughout the rural area serving the farming community

A rating and regulation process that does not distinguish between properties in production and those used for rural living or lying idle

Farmers trying to operate and earn a living and concerned about high costs of environmental compliance, rates and inflationary pressures on land prices making it uneconomical to farm

Businesses in the agricultural, visitor and tourist service sector trying to operate and earn a living

A number of extraction and utility sites in operation and the possibility of more sites in the future

What we want?

Strong production agriculture (farming and forestry) component over much of northern and western Rodney with farmers able to carry out their business without undue regulation and costs (AG1, AG2, GB1, GB2)

Strong mixed agricultural production, (farming, forestry horticulture, viticulture + non-agricultural rural business) component in:

- A belt from Kaipara Flats village to Matakana (MIX1)
- A wide belt along Peak Road, Kahikatea Flat Road and State Highway 17 (MIX2)

Strong mixed agricultural production, (farming, horticulture, viticulture, + non-agricultural rural business) component in:

- Parakai/Waimauku area (GB2)
- Waimauku/Taupaki/Coatesville area (MIX3, GB3)
- Waitoki/Kaukapakapa area (MIX2)

Appropriate non-agricultural service sector enterprises focused in the most suitable rural areas subject to appropriate controls

Rural service villages supporting the agricultural production role, and dormitory or resort living in non-service villages, reducing pressure on surrounding rural areas for dormitory lifestyle or holiday accommodation

Controls and allowances for some lifestyle residential activity depending on effects on production activity

An appropriate roading network that supports the production sector

How do we get it?

A tailored **rural production environment** with:

- Basic planning controls on agricultural production activity other than in key landscape and environmental overlay areas which are subject to stricter controls (See Quality Landscape and Quality Environment imperatives)
- Rates remission mechanisms for productive agricultural units
- Limitations on lifestyle residential activity with incentives to locate rural title allowances to villages and other rural areas (See Lifestyle Choices imperative)
- Some flexibility for small scale low intensity non-agricultural rural businesses.

A tailored **mixed rural environment** with:

- Agricultural production in various forms operating unhindered but with consideration for other sensitive uses – lifestyle residential and service sector enterprises
- General flexibility towards a range of productive non-agricultural rural enterprises that can be well integrated into the rural environment with effects contained on-site.
- Landscape controls appropriate to the intensive and more varied use of this environment as compared to rural production environment (See Quality Landscape and Quality Environment imperatives)
- Lifestyle residential activity focus acknowledged but well managed (See Lifestyle Choices imperative)
- Measures to avoid unduly restricting production activities
- Appropriate landscaping measures and site sizes to retain a rural feel – avoiding the rural area becoming “industrial” or suburbanised

New **rural lifestyle environment** with:

- Mechanisms to absorb demand for rural living.
- Landscape controls appropriate to the more intensive use of this environment for lifestyle activities

Zoning of identified service villages to enable the rural service sector to operate (businesses and community services) and encourage residential activity associated with the service functions.

Rules limiting non-residential activity in dormitory resort and bach settlements, to avoid undermining the rural service villages and retain amenity.

Quality Landscapes

What we have?

A diverse rural farming landscape characterised by pastures, forests, a rich natural history, farm buildings and farming activities

Important coastal landscapes, hill country landscapes, scenic routes, ridgelines and views

Widespread lifestyle subdivision across the rural areas adversely affecting some important landscapes

Building locations and designs, earthworks and driveways that often fit poorly with rural landscapes

Excessive signage and semi-urbanisation of some areas with resulting degradation of the rural landscape

What we want?

Working rural farming landscapes admired for their attractiveness without undue restriction

Important rural landscapes retained such as:

- around Muriwai, the Kaipara Harbour, the Mahurangi Coast, Leigh, Pakiri and Te Arai.
- in the green-buffer areas of elevated bush clad and forested areas around the Dome Forest Range (GB1), the Mount Auckland area and the Moirs Hill area (GB2)
- the Goldies Bush, Albany Ridge and Okura catchment areas (GB3)

Strong feeling of being in a rural landscape retained in spite of high activity levels and mix of uses in the:

- Kaipara Flats to Matakana area (MIX1)
- A wide belt along Peak Road, Kahikatea Flat Road and State Highway 17 (MIX2)

Spoilt parts of the rural areas that have lost or are losing the rural feel, being gradually improved by re-establishing rural character

Attractive, quality villages retained with clear edges which are allowed to grow without sprawling along roads or into surrounding rural landscapes

How do we get it?

A basic set of **universal landscape controls** with:

- Limited reasonable landscaping measures to retain a rural feel and avoid the rural area becoming "industrial"

A **landscape protection policy overlay** over important rural landscapes with allowances for normal production, lifestyle or other activities but with:

- Controls directing residential buildings below the tops of significant ridgelines and restricting major earthworks (land modification)
- Controls on the reflectivity of buildings on elevated sites.
- Restrictions on uses other than farming and production activities
- Screening of development activities if development is allowed

Rural design policy overlay in the mixed rural environment with measures to retain a rural feel and avoid the rural area becoming suburbanised or industrial in exchange for flexible controls on activities. Measures to include:

- Controls on signage
- Strong mitigation requirements for buildings with screening and road setbacks, ridgeline controls
- Controls on building reflectivity on elevated sites.
- Development controls focused on restoring and enhancing spoilt landscapes (cleanups) including bylaw changes

Village character policy overlay with:

- Villages retained within clearly defined limits not sprawling into surrounding rural landscapes and along roads
- Controls on the range of activities in the rural service villages, preventing large scale urban uses that detract from village character
- Limits on non-residential activities in dormitory, resort and bach settlements to preserve amenity and avoid undermining viability of rural service villages
- Appropriate controls on building quality in the villages to retain their character

Strong Viable Communities

What we have?

A relatively young active farming community wanting to live the rural lifestyle and earn a living in a rural environment, dependent mainly on the towns and villages for services and on the city for market access.

A sector of the community that may not farm but who work in the service sector, serving the visitor and tourist trade, the farming and lifestyle communities

A strong and growing lifestyle community who enjoy rural living but are dependent on villages, towns and the city for work, entertainment, education and other services

Visitor and holiday communities who reside in the rural countryside or a number of mainly seaside villages

What we want?

A strong farming community in the rural production areas (AG1, AG2, GB1, GB2)
Good support services for agriculture such as a good roading network access to the city, towns and villages for access to markets, services and facilities.

Mixed lifestyle and farming community centred on key rural villages with good access to recreational opportunities, services and facilities.

A range of housing choices in the rural service villages meeting the requirements of a small but mainly permanent resident population.

Schools, shops, recreational facilities in the villages, supporting surrounding rural community.

Mixed permanent resident or holiday populations in the dormitory and resort villages.

The housing requirements of mainly holiday populations being met in attractive bach and resort settlements.

How do we get it?

Continuing to encourage spending on national highways to avoid significant bottlenecks such as in Warkworth in the future in places like Kumeu and Wellsford. Continuing to advocate for and to support rolling out fast internet services in rural areas.

Focus infrastructure spending on a number of key routes serving the **rural production** environment:

- Wayby Valley Road, Mangawhai Road
- Whangaripo Valley Road, Port Albert Road
- Run Road, South Head Road
- West Coast Road, Ahuroa Road, Muriwai Road

Focus infrastructure spending on a number of key routes serving the **mixed rural** and **rural lifestyle** environments:

- Coatesville Riverhead Highway, Ridge, Awanohi, Taupaki, Waitakere and Wairere Roads
- Matakana, Leigh, Takatu and Kaipara Flats Roads
- Kahikatea Flat, Waitoki, Wainui and Weranui Roads,
- Peak Road, Old North, Waitakere, Tawa and Awa Roads

Rural service towns under pressure which may (subject to structure planning processes) be subject to considerable further growth:

- Snells Beach/Algies Bay
- Matakana
- Riverhead, Waimauku and Kaukapakapa
- Waiwera

Rural service villages which may be subject to some growth and/or diversification but will generally be retained as small contained villages:

- Kaipara Flats, Puhoi
- Tomarata, Pakiri, Tapora, Tauhoa
- Coatesville, Wainui, Dairy Flat, Taupaki, Waitoki and Woodhill

Rules in the rural service villages allowing a range of business and community service activities serving the rural and visitor community but limiting the range of uses to avoid large scale urban uses that may detract from village character

Rules and zonings that manage/influence the supply of housing land to enable rural service sector populations to locate in the rural service villages

Rules flexible enough to allow a range of housing types in the dormitory, resort and bach settlements but which do not detract from village character

Lifestyle Choices

What we have?

Widespread rural subdivision and concerns about the loss of country look and feel

Economic and community benefits from a growing rural residential population

A proportion of lifestyle communities working from home in professional services, trades and agricultural support services

Concerns about the loss of productive potential of rural land

Tensions between the rural residential community and the production sector around issues of noise, smell and spraying

Demand for improved roading standards for lifestyle residents to get to places of work, schooling and services

Rapidly changing trip generation as a result of lifestyle subdivision

Lax subdivision standards being subverted to increase subdivision yields

Farmers feeling forced to subdivide

What we want?

Less prolific subdivision in the main agricultural production areas (AG1, AG2, GB1, GB2) with:

- less pressure on the roading network
- better protection of sensitive landscapes and environments
- reduced tensions between lifestyle and rural production activities

Lifestyle subdivision opportunities in the southern green buffer (GB3) and in areas around the main towns, with these areas being:

- rural (not urban) in character in spite of higher densities
- clearly distinct in character from any adjacent urban environments, Auckland, the main centres and villages based on strong underlying road network with service levels consistent with high levels of activity
- related to and co-dependent on the rural service villages
- gradually improved, with spoilt areas being enhanced through less signage, sensitively located buildings and screen planting.

Lifestyle subdivision opportunities in the tailored *mixed rural environments* with:

- subdivision processes that ensure tensions between lifestyle and production activities are minimised
- a distinctly rural environment retained in spite of high levels of activity
- a strong underlying road network with service levels consistent with high levels of activity

How do we get it?

Restrictions on further lifestyle subdivision in the *rural production environment* with:

- Transferable title rights (TTR's) used to transfer existing or potential titles to villages or other rural receiving areas where necessary
- Granting subdivision rights in exchange for protecting significant natural areas and other targeted benefits (See Quality environment imperative)

Lifestyle opportunities in the *rural lifestyle environment* along the Auckland boundary (GB3) and around selected towns and rural service villages with:

- a range of countryside living subdivision opportunities
- rezoning of parts of the general rural zone to countryside living
- development in the country living area based on transferring development rights from other zones
- controls on signs, building quality, screening and setback of buildings as well as planting requirements and bush protection
- identification of *bush living policy overlay* in key SNA clusters such as the Goldies Bush, Okura/Weiti and Waiwera areas, only allowing subdivision there in exchange for bush protection (See Quality environment imperative)

Lifestyle subdivision accepted in the tailored *mixed rural environment* but with:

- higher minimum lot sizes than the countryside living environment to retain rural character, potential for productive use and to reduce potential for conflicts with production uses.
- opportunities to receive TTR's from other environment as well as opportunities to relocate title rights (TTR's) to the rural service villages
- strict controls on signs, building quality, screening and setback of buildings as well as planting requirements and bush protection in exchange for development rights

Quality Environmental Outcomes

What we have?

Environmental enhancement subdivision rules resulting in widespread subdivision creating other concerns:

- a proliferation of disconnected low-grade bush lots across the district
- widespread subdivision putting pressure on rural roading networks
- creating tensions where rural lifestyle subdivision occurs in production areas

Large areas of SNA's in private ownership, have some protection from rules but don't have any sort of covenant or maintenance obligations attached to them

There is a view that strong planning regulations, implemented consistently, to protect threatened ecosystems and conserve scarce natural resources are legitimate

Rural Rodney has significant areas of regional park and Conservation estate

Other sensitive environments warrant better protection

What we want?

A focus on protecting what is important

Key areas in the production northern and western agricultural production areas and green buffer areas (AG1, AG2, GB1, GB2, GB3) including the Conservation, estate, regional parks and Council conservation reserves, SNA's and covenanted areas to remain protected and well maintained.

Additional areas given focused protection:

- identify major groupings of unprotected privately owned SNA's, reserves and covenanted areas as a focus for achieving ecological linkages across sequences of vegetation types;
- Whangateau Harbour, Dome Valley-Pakiri, Mahurangi, Kaipara Harbour, Waiwera – Orewa, Matakana Estuary

Less subdivision incentives for natural area protection in areas of fragmented and isolated habitat of marginal ecological importance

How do we get it?

Create a **bush living policy overlay** in key ecological areas with policies to actively seek protection of remaining unprotected SNA's using:

- Development rights limited to protection of habitats
- Transferable titles rights to move development rights away from sensitive areas to suitable receiving areas where appropriate

General protection rules (earthworks vegetation removal and wetland protection) to be consistent with tailored zone objectives (general rural production zone, mixed rural zones, and countryside living zones)

Limit general (untargeted) rules promoting environmental enhancement in exchange for subdivision and development rights

Structure plan urban settlements to clearly defined limits to avoid encroachment into sensitive environments

Well Managed Utility Function

What we have?

There are already a number of aggregate extraction sites and refuse, cleanfill and infrastructure sites in rural Rodney, such as significant mineral extraction resources at Flat Top and Wainui.

There are also known but as yet unexploited aggregate/mineral resources in parts of rural Rodney.

A national power grid traversing the District.

Potential renewable energy sites.

Rural Rodney plays an important part in meeting utility requirements for the metropolitan area. There will be pressures in future for further aggregates and utility sites to be established.

Utility sites bring associated traffic, noise, dust and other environmental effects, which threaten the things people value about rural areas.

What we want?

Quarries/extraction/utility sites are provided for in the northern and far western production areas and the green buffers (AG1, AG2, GB1, GB2) as follows:

- Whangaripo Greywacke
- Utility sites serving the towns - Wellsford, Helensville
- Sand extraction at Woodhill and Te Arai
- Mount Rex

These sites will be:

- well managed in the context of other sensitive land uses supported by a good road network

Cautious approach to quarries/extraction/utility sites and areas in the mixed activity rural areas around Warkworth (MIX1) and closer to Auckland (MIX2 and MIX3) but with strict management controls as follows:

- Omaha Greywacke, Jones Road wastewater site
- Warkworth Lime
- Potential Greywacke resources on Leigh and Takatū areas Wainui quarries
- Kaipara Flats Airfield and North Shore Airfield
- Future Albany Conglomerate and Waitakere Andesites

Identified sensitive landscapes and environments in some parts of the production areas (AG1 and AG2) mixed rural activity belts MIX1, MIX2 and MIX3, and the green buffers (GB1, GB2 and GB3), as well as the higher quality versatile soils of the District, remain well protected and buffered from extraction sites, refuse, cleanfill and utility activities.

Well managed and efficient extraction of identified significant mineral extraction resources.

The retention of an efficient and effective national power network through the District.

The retention of an efficient and effective national power network through the District and the careful consideration of sources of and sites for renewable energy.

How do we get it?

A **key utility sites overlay** with:

- Varying degrees of utility site management across the rural area
- Rules allowing aggregate and utility sites but with appropriate controls placed on and around all known and potential future utility sites
- Utility industries to pay their share of associated road upgrade costs
- Rules discouraging lifestyle residential activity in close proximity to utility sites and networks (See Lifestyle choices imperative)
- Strong limitations on utility sites in highly sensitive landscapes and environments (See Quality environments and Quality landscapes imperatives)
- Management of effects of extraction and utility sites and associated traffic on service villages and neighbours
- Manage effects of extraction and utility sites on dormitory, resort and bach settlements
- Identification of new sites subject to appropriate controls
- Master planning on and around key utility sites.

Focus of expenditure on key routes into and out of utility sites and measures along those routes to mitigate effects (See Strong viable communities imperative).

Creation of a general awareness of utility sites and routes to minimise tensions, and limiting new settlement and sensitive activities on adjoining sites.

Well Managed Recreational Function

What we have?

Some of Auckland's premier recreational destinations

Popular coastlines and coastal holiday settlements

Regional parks, conservation estates and private forest park locations and a wide range of tourist and visitor related facilities in the rural areas, towns and villages

Strong demands on roading infrastructure, services, facilities and sensitive environments on weekends, over summer and during peak holiday times

Significant potential for visitor oriented sustainable tourism and rural tourism activities

Insufficient market capture given the quality of recreational resources and our proximity to Auckland

Recreational vehicles adversely affecting sensitive bird breeding areas on the west coast.

What we want?

An avoidance of widespread recreational activity and related service sector activities across the agricultural production areas (AG1 and AG2) with activity focussed on recognised locations (towns, resort and bach settlements, regional and forest parks (eg. Woodhill, and recognised coastal access points)

Acceptance of a strong well managed but not widespread recreational component in the green buffer area (GB1, GB2 and GB3), focused on key sites (Goat Island, Woodhill, Dome Forest, Mahurangi Coastline and the Muriwai Coast and golf course)

A strong recreational focus on the high tourist activity areas (MIX1, MIX 2 and MIX3) servicing urban Auckland with a range of recreational activities based on a good roading and services network

Rural service villages serving the tourist and visitor trades as well as the rural service function

Dormitory, resort and bach settlements meeting holiday homes demands but with a limited service function:

- Birds Beach, Shelly Beach
- Jamieson/Opahi Bay
- Matheson Bay, Ti Point, Whangateau, Point Wells
- Omaha, Buckleton/Baddeleys, Rainbows End, Sandspit and Muriwai

How do we get it?

A key **recreational activities policy overlay** with:

- Varying degrees of recreational activity intensity across the rural area
- Enabling rules for recreational activities with reasonable controls – relating to traffic generation, effects on threatened and other effects in the countryside living environment and mixed rural environment
- Enabling rules for recreational service activities (cafes, shops, accommodation etc) in the rural service villages, with reasonable controls
- New recreational activities to pay their share of associated road upgrade costs
- Rules limit and potentially discourage recreational activities that might place excessive demands on rural farm roads general rural production environment
- Limitations on recreational activities in sensitive environments and landscapes identified in the ecological areas protection layer and green buffer landscapes protection layer, consistent with their qualities and where recreational activities do occur – they are subject to controls and limitations
- Resort and bach settlements recognised as visitor/resort/holiday home locations with appropriate controls limiting the scope of non-residential recreational activities but optimising the holiday village experience

Figure 6. Schematic Settlements and Key Transport Links Layer Diagram.

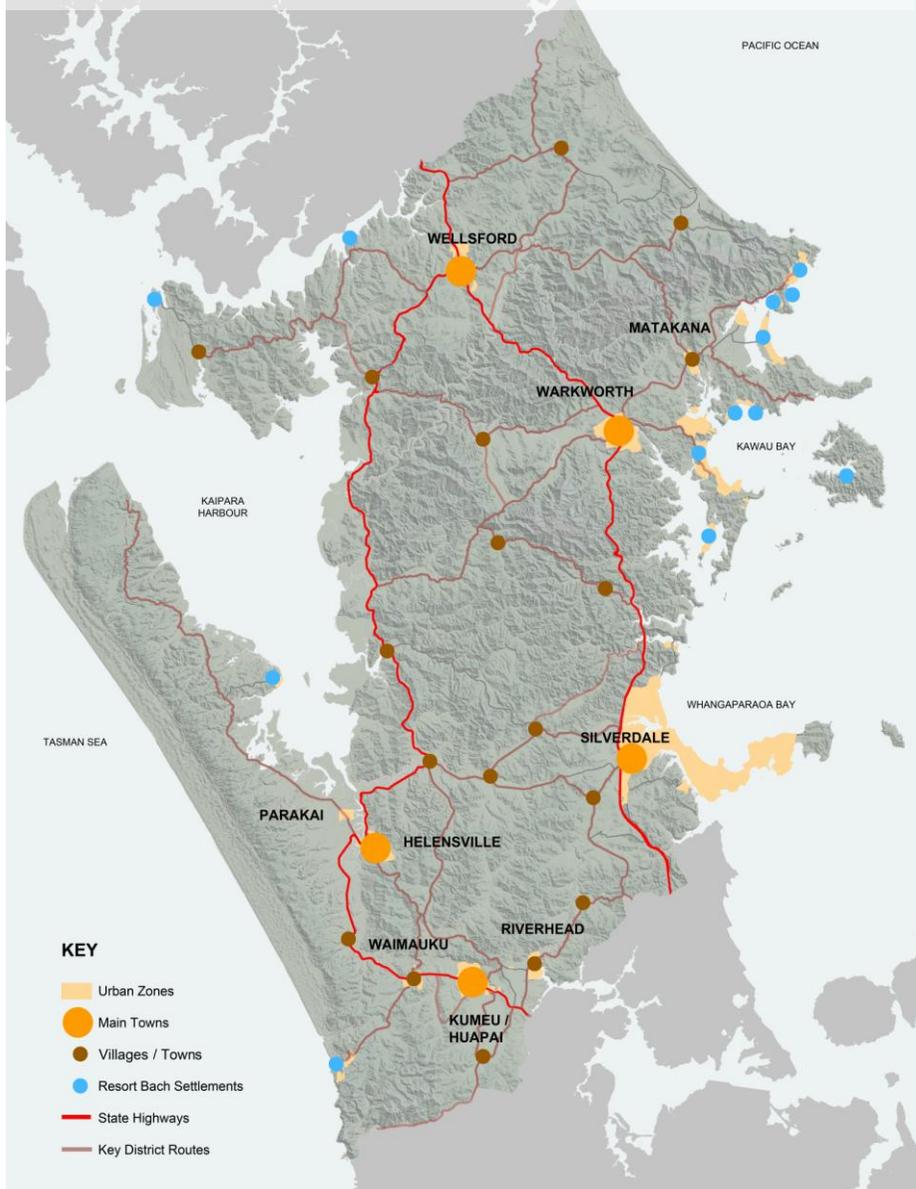


Figure 7. Schematic Environment Layer Diagram.

The Rural Lifestyle Environment layer comprise areas where different types of rural settlement are contemplated, but are not the Countryside Living Zones of the current District Plan. Area boundaries are indicative at this stage.

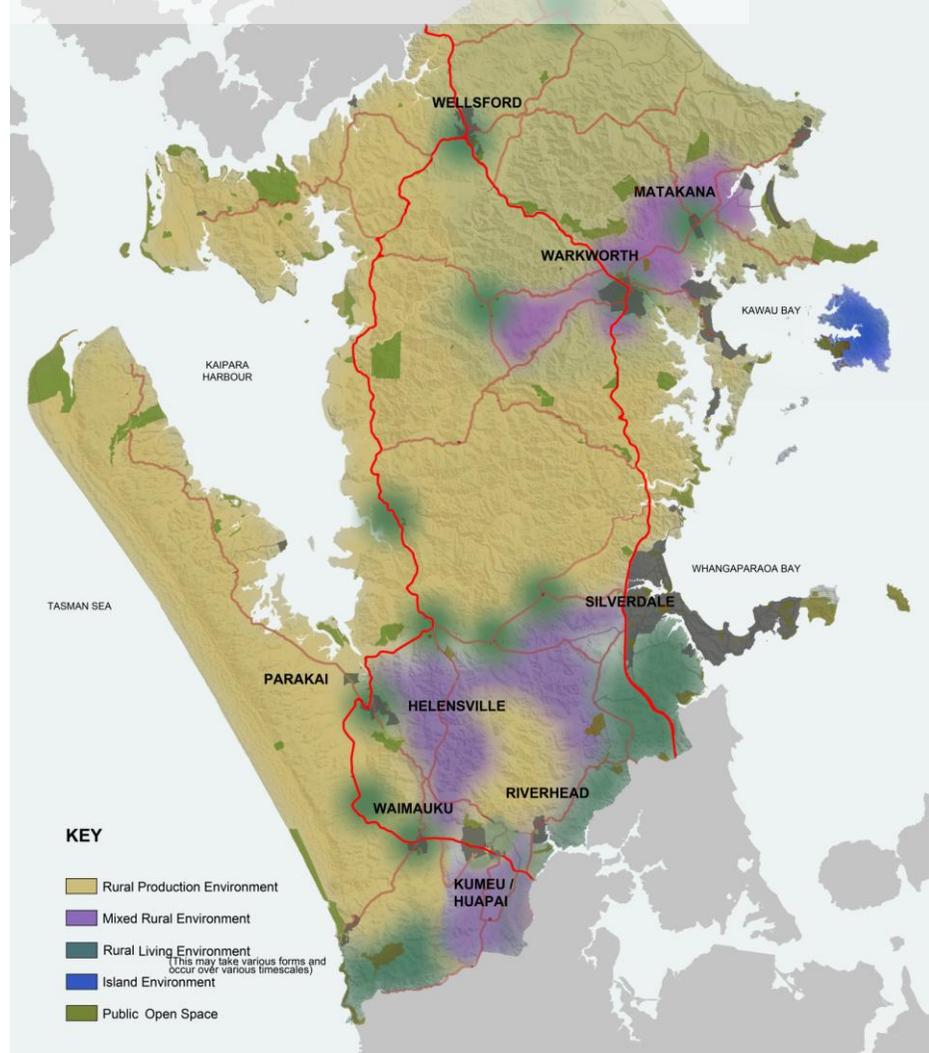


Figure 8A. Schematic Outstanding Landscapes Diagram

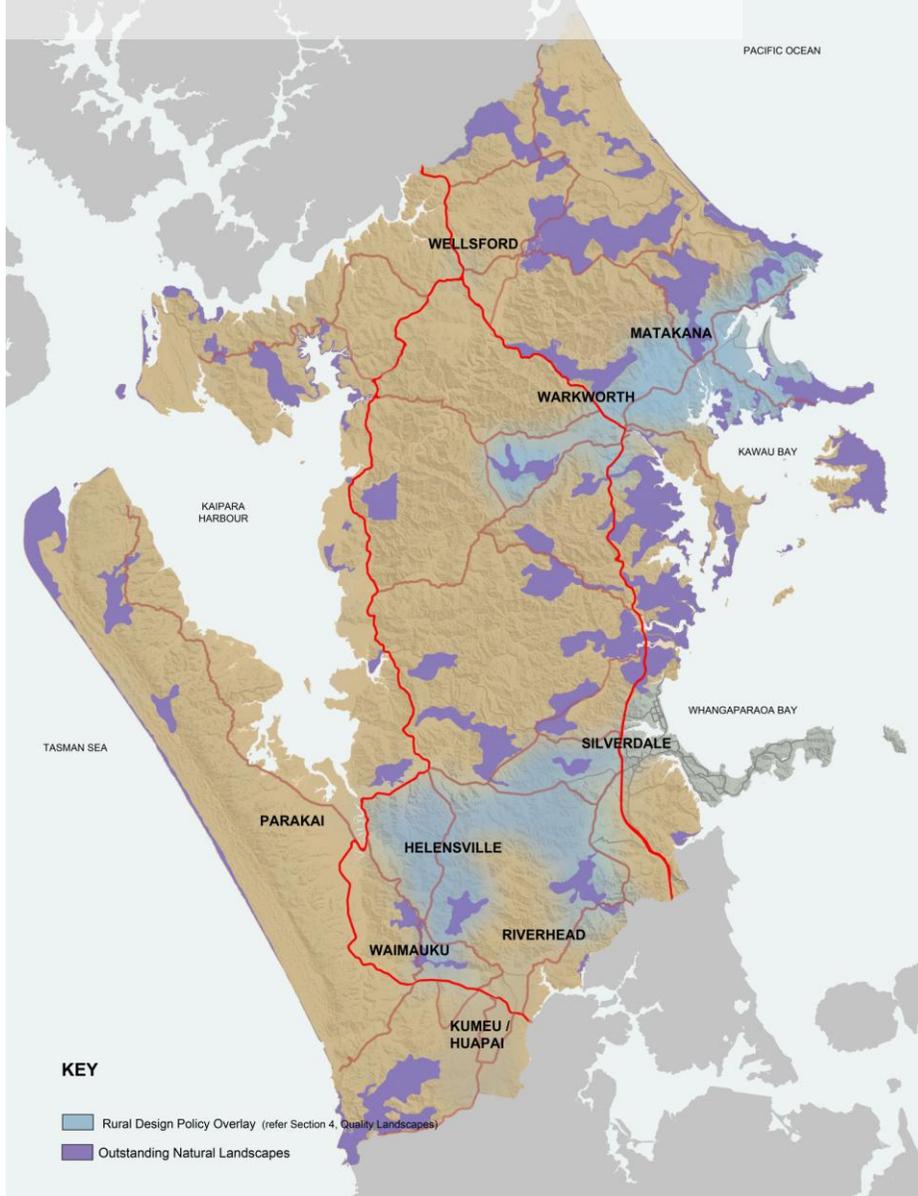


Figure 8B. Schematic Ecological Protection Areas Diagram



Figure 8C. Schematic District Amenity Landscapes Diagram

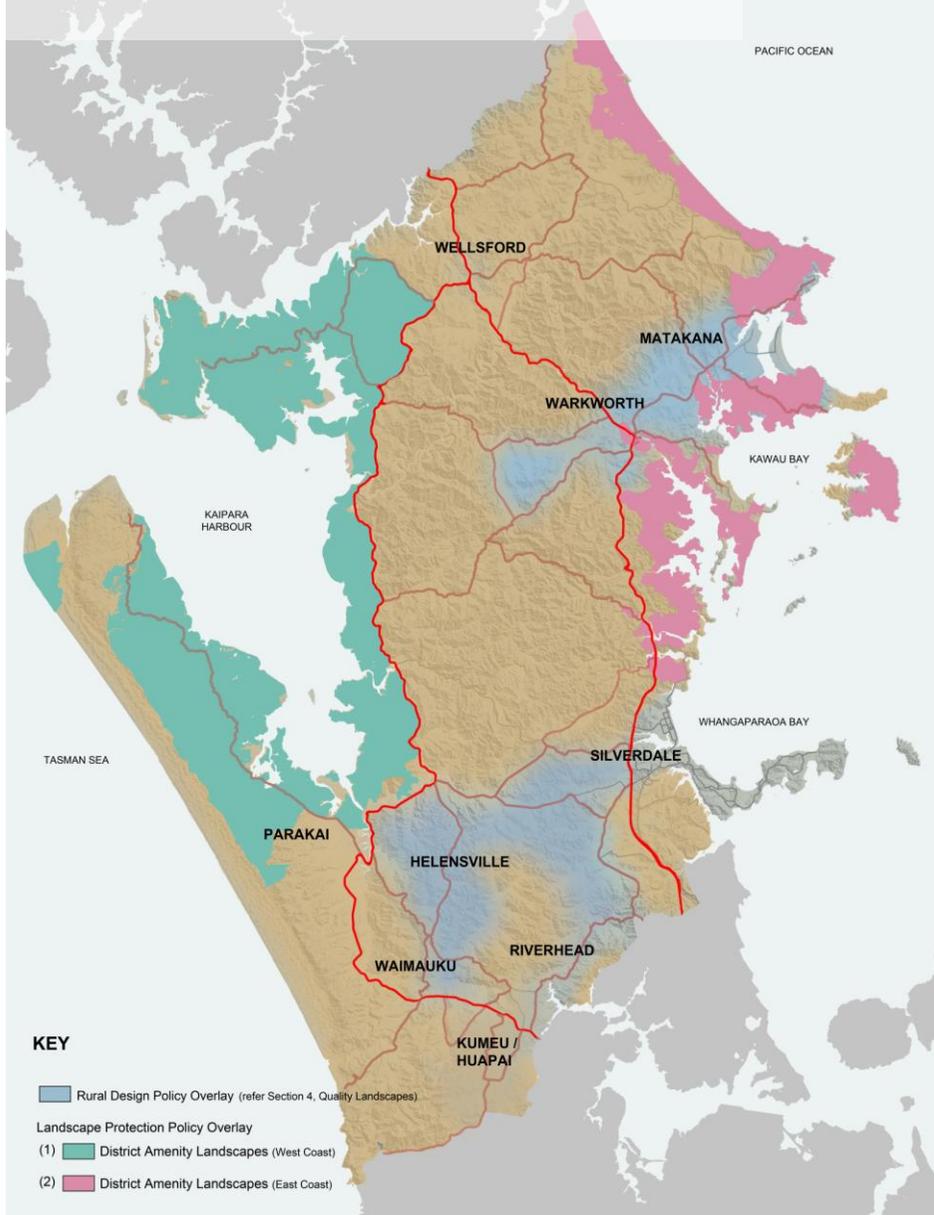
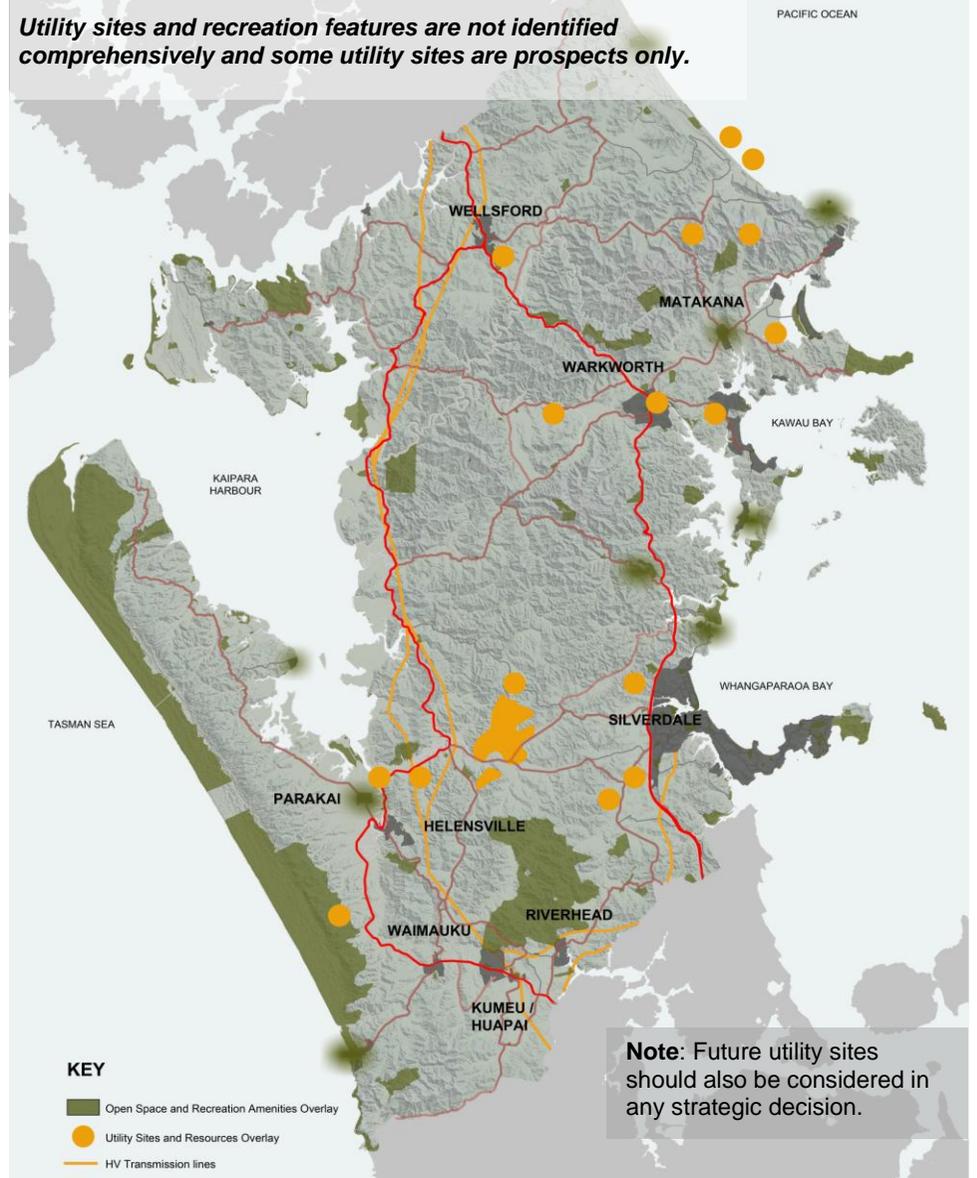


Figure 9. Schematic Key Utility Sites and Recreation Activities Layer Diagram

Utility sites and recreation features are not identified comprehensively and some utility sites are prospects only.



4.2 Making the Strategy Work

Spatial Plan

The new Auckland Council is required to prepare a Spatial Plan for Auckland, which will guide the Council's LTCCP, its infrastructure investment plans, its statutory plans under the Resource Management Act and other policy approaches.

The Rural Strategy is intended to place the new Auckland Council in a position where, when making its Spatial plan, it will have:

- a good knowledge of the issues facing rural Rodney;
- the strategic imperatives identified by the Rodney community;
- a series of policy measures which if taken, will address the issues and achieve the imperatives.

District Plan Changes

The strategy signals a set of possible changes to the District Plan involving a number of rural environments and accompanying overlays, which may apply across more than one of these environments. It is not the role of a strategy to provide all of the details of these plan changes however the key directions for the District Plan are set out in Section 4 below.

The basic environments are:

- the Rural Production Environment
- the Mixed Rural Environment
- the Rural Lifestyle Environment

Overlays (to be implemented through the most appropriate mix of specific zones, rules and assessment criteria) are:

- Separate Kaipara Coast and East Coast Areas
- Bush Living Area
- Green Buffer, Ecological Protection and Landscape Protection overlays
- Key utilities sites and recreation activity overlays

The rural villages are also an important element. Although somewhat urban in nature, the rural strategy gives direction to the District Plan for how rural villages should be managed as a key component of rural areas.

A review of the rural provisions of the District Plan will be required to develop details of:

- regulatory methods that best meet the strategic imperatives (viable rural production, lifestyle choice etc) to be variously applied across the whole rural area, or just within each of the tailored management areas;
- methods to be applied within each overlay to land (whatever its management approach) in order to address the particular issues relating to that overlay; and
- methods to be applied to the rural service villages in particular and to the resort/ bach villages, in support of the rural imperatives.

Infrastructure decision making

Amongst other things, the Auckland Spatial Plan is required to:

- specify resources that will be provided to implement the strategic direction;
- set out a development strategy on how to achieve broad policy objectives for land use, transport, other infrastructure and environmental management;
- guide the future, location of critical infrastructure and any associated investment in Auckland;
- give direction to, and align, implementation plans, regulatory plans, and funding plans.

It is important that the directions of this Rural Strategy are incorporated into or at least strongly influence the Spatial Plan. In this way they will follow through into the Council's LTCCP process including its asset management plans, infrastructure plans and accompanying funding processes.

Organisational alignment

The imperatives in this Rural Strategy will not be achieved by only making changes to the District Plan and by giving directions to the LTCCP process. The organisation as a whole must "pull together".

Policy work in areas such as reserve management planning, economic development planning, social policy making, promotion and bylaw making should all be guided by the Rural Strategy. Indications of some of the ways in which these types of policy making can take direction from the Rural Strategy are set out in Section 4.

5 SPECIFIC INITIATIVES – TAILORED MANAGEMENT APPROACHES

5.1.1 Where we are now

Zones are used in the District Plan to simply identify areas with different aims and issues and different approaches to addressing them.

The **General Rural Zone** makes up 86% of private rural zoned land. This zone seeks to foster rural production activities and opportunities to enhance native biodiversity and the protection of significant natural features. The **East Coast Rural Zone**, **Landscape Protection Rural zone** and **Dune Lakes zone** (5%, 3% and 1% of rural zoned land respectively) are coastal rural zones that seek to manage the impacts of buildings and non-rural activities on their high landscape and natural environment values while retaining most of the development opportunities in the General Rural zone. The **Countryside Living Rural Zone**, **Countryside Living Town Zone** (3% and 1% of rural zoned land respectively), seek to absorb development pressure by allowing more intensive subdivision.



Figure 10. The General Rural Zone contains many contrasting areas often with different pressures and little in the way of identifiable shared characteristics

**Zoning of Rural Land in Proposed Plan 2000 at July 2008
(hectares and % of rural zoned land)**

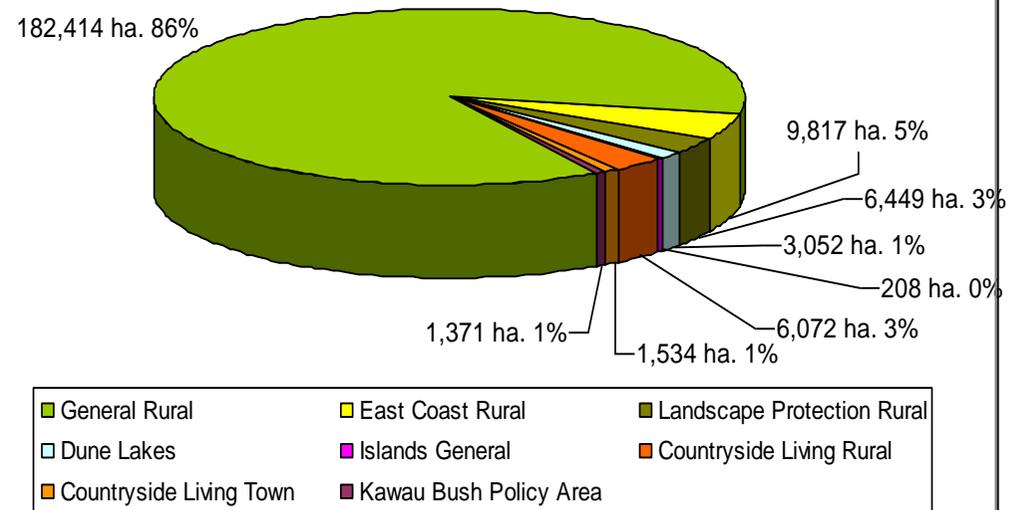


Figure 11. Rural Zoned Land in the Proposed Plan 2008, RDC 2008.

5.1.2 Specific Initiatives - Tailored Rural Management Approaches

Based on analysis of property sizes, development trends, land uses, soil versatility, land cover, landscape character and other factors, a more tailored approach to resource management is proposed for the rural area which include a number of changes from the current District Plan approach. The key elements of this approach are set out in the following pages including identifying the key differences from the current district plan approach. See diagrams on pages 27-29 for an indication of the areas proposed.

Rural Production Environment

Description

Areas with generally large land holdings and low population and building density. These areas have been assessed as most suited to a rural production focus with opportunities to enhance native biodiversity and protect significant natural features.

Recommended Rural Production Areas

Rural areas around Tapora, Tomarata, Tauhoa, west and north of South Head, Ahuroa, Makarau, Waimauku (western side), Dome Valley, and Woodhill and Riverhead forests.

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT

Enable productive use of land without degrading or destroying the districts natural and physical resources.

Maintain the predominance of large sites in productive use.

Conflicts between different land uses avoided.

Protection and enhancement of native biodiversity, natural landscape qualities and significant natural areas.

Limited lifestyle opportunities provided consistent with a working rural environment and natural environment.

Address impacts on the receiving environments and catchments with significant sedimentation and erosion issues through environmental enhancement incentives.

Rural resources and the working rural environment rather than urban and residential forms dominate the character of the area.

Less 'ad hoc' subdivision and lifestyle development.

HOW THIS COULD BE DONE

Farming permitted

No consent needed for farming, forestry and similar agricultural activities within appropriate limits which allow for their reasonable operational requirements and flexibility to address changes to rural production. Non-rural activities should be restricted to enable farming activities to dominate in the Rural Production Environment, while it should be acknowledged that intensive farming activities are appropriate within the Rural Production Environment subject to rules or resource consent to mitigate effects depending on the scale of the proposed activity. A facilitative approach is taken to mariculture and land based aquaculture with appropriate rules to manage scale and proliferation.

Significant resources protected and enhanced

Controls on rural activities focused on where they affect highly valued or sensitive natural resources such as streams, bush, dunes, landscapes. Performance standards are used instead of resource consent processes where practical.

Limited rural residential development

Meet demand for living in the rural production areas only where likely impacts on production activities can be readily avoided and where native vegetation and wildlife habitat areas are protected and significantly enhanced. This approach will include a clear requirement to transfer entitlements to subdivide elsewhere or refuse development proposals in situations where it would be undesirable to allow the development rights to be used in-situ. It also provides some potential to use environmental enhancement subdivision incentives to transition out of pastoral farming and forestry where this achieves better environmental outcomes.

Improving land use practices

Multifaceted partnering, support, education, incentives, rules, monitoring, enforcement approaches to lessen environmental impacts of rural land uses. An example of this could be formulating annual tonnage targets for contaminants in rivers for sub-catchment communities to assess stewardship progress against.

Supportive Rates Structures

Viability of farming improved by reducing rural rates to levels comparable with similar rural areas in NZ. Rates remissions for removing, placing in abeyance or transferring unutilised development rights. Rates relief for active productive farming, for high value environmental benefits, or high value recreation benefits

Prioritise road sealing

Although an improved basic arterial road network is critical to this strategy's success, avoiding the upfront and ongoing expense of local road sealing in areas where significant levels of lifestyle development is undesirable will redirect development demand without regulation.

Utility function

Acknowledgement of the potential for sensitively planned and well managed utility functions such as clean fill and mineral and aggregate extraction to occur while responding to relevant environmental constraints.

MOST NOTICABLE DIFFERENCES

- A more cautious and selective approach to subdivision involving higher levels of benefits needed to subdivide and limited recognition of isolated fragments of habitat.
- In balancing competing interests in rural areas, regulatory actions will be clear about the legitimacy of a wide range of productive activities.
- Reduce permitted standards for earthworks volumes, bush removal, modifying water bodies, building coverage and height limits to levels consistent with the reasonable requirements of farming, rural production activities and "low key" rural living.
- Consent process can require development rights from subdivision to be transferred to a suitable receiving site where key outcomes can't be reconciled with development of the site.

WHY THIS APPROACH

- Productive rural land is a finite, valuable and diminishing resource. 15,418 ha of land in Rodney was converted from pastoral farming and 6,039 ha was converted from dairying between 1995 – 2008 (which were times of generally high commodity prices). This was accompanied by an increase in the area of land occupied by lifestyle properties of 37%.
- People working the land is important for keeping the rural character and identity of many of the rural areas of Rodney for local jobs and for the functioning of the entire local economy.
- A clear policy focus on fostering rural production activities that anticipates varying levels of effects can provide certainty and minimise conflict between different land uses.
- Parts of the district identified as Rural Production Environments have relatively large site sizes, are often physically difficult to develop, are farthest from residential and rural residential lifestyle areas and have had less subdivision and residential growth than other rural areas.
- Significant changes in the range and intensity of non-productive activities in these areas would further squeeze farming out of the district; bring about huge changes in character and problematic demand for physical and community infrastructure.
- The current district plan imposes greater limitations on activities that are likely to impact on coastal water quality within certain coastal areas but does not address major sources higher up in sub-catchments.
- Bush and other important natural habitat areas are reducing in number and in size overall, year on year.

tailored management approaches continued

Kaipara Harbour and West Coast Area

Description

These are remote farming areas within the rural production area that have close proximity to the Kaipara Harbour. These areas are suited for rural production with some opportunities to enhance native biodiversity and protect significant natural features. They are also areas with potential future development pressure where subdivision needs to be managed.

The Kaipara Harbour and West Coast Area adjoins the Kaipara Harbour which is an important resource for the District.

Recommended Kaipara Harbour and West Coast Areas

This could include rural areas around Tapora and the eastern side of South Head including Shelly Beach, the South Head Dune Lakes, the eastern side of the Kaipara Harbour including the bushy hills west of Kaukapakapa. However, the Kaipara Harbour and West Coast Area Overlay has not been specifically identified on Figures 14 or 15 as the extent of this area needs to be determined in the future through District Plan processes.

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT	HOW THIS COULD BE DONE	WHY THIS APPROACH
<p>See Rural Production Area above.</p> <p><i>Natural character of the coastal environment and the sensitive ecology and other environmental values of the area will be protected from the effects of inappropriate subdivision and residential development.</i></p> <p><i>The design of any new subdivision (including resulting buildings and structures) occurs in a way that enhances or protects these values.</i></p> <p><i>Values of sites of significance to Tangata Whenua are protected.</i></p> <p><i>Environmental enhancement incentives for sub-catchments with significant sedimentation issues.</i></p>	<p>See Rural Production Area</p> <p>Farming permitted The same approach to everyday farming activities and associated development as the Rural Production area would apply.</p> <p>Assessment criteria Where subdivision development is applied for, additional assessment criteria would address impacts on the rural coastal environment and the natural character of the associated dune lands, the low lying farms and mud flats, and the hills around Kaukapakapa and Tapora.</p> <p>Mitigation Planting around water bodies and streams, screen planting and building setbacks, building design and location controls would be promoted through subdivision consent process.</p>	<p>See Rural Production Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Historically the land around the Kaipara Harbour has not had the same development pressures as the east coast. However there is already some pressure around the Kaipara Harbour which is likely to increase over time. This could impact on production and the environment if subdivision is not managed. A specific approach can be developed for areas such as the dune lakes to address their unique issues and circumstances. This approach recognises and enhances the special qualities of the Kaipara Harbour and its importance to iwi and other stakeholders.
MOST NOTICABLE DIFFERENCES	<p>Dune Lakes A strongly precautionary and protective approach to be taken to assessing and managing development in the sensitive dune lakes environment while retaining some opportunity for these areas to be retired from forestry and farming. Additional controls to achieve this could be implemented with an overlay. These will aim to ensure settlement and urban development is located away from areas where they will affect the lakes.</p>	
<p>See Rural Production Area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Particularly cautious approach to managing the impact of future subdivision activity on the character of the coastal environment. 		

Rural Coastal Areas

Description

Rural coastal areas containing commercial and lifestyle farming and forestry, a range of small settlements and remote areas, major tourist attractions, significant coastal landforms, vegetation, beaches and estuaries, sensitive environmental features around and including the Mahurangi and Whangateau Harbour. These areas have a number of overlays (landscape and ecological areas in particular) and have been assessed as areas with significant development pressure, suited for rural production, for complimentary tourism and recreational activities with opportunities to protect significant natural features and significant landscapes.

Recommended Rural Coastal Areas

Coastal rural environment from the District's northern boundary at Te Arai to Cape Rodney taking in the Tomarata Dune Lakes, Pakiri and the hills immediately above it, Leigh, Whangateau including the Whangateau catchment, down to Omaha Flats. The Tawharanui Peninsula including Badleys Beach and Campbells Beach and Green Road are also included as are the areas around the Mahurangi Harbour including Martins Bay, Scotts Landing, Jamieson Bay, and land east of Puhoi down as far as Waiwera.

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT	HOW THIS COULD BE DONE	WHY THIS APPROACH
<p><i>Natural character of the coastal environment and the sensitive ecology and other environmental values of the area protected from inappropriate subdivision and development.</i></p> <p><i>Catchments with significant sedimentation and erosion issues have environmental enhancement.</i></p> <p><i>The design of any new subdivision (including resulting buildings and structures) occurs in a way that enhances or protects these values.</i></p> <p><i>Greater use of the potential for tourism and recreational activities while protecting the key values of the area.</i></p> <p><i>Values of sites of significance to Tangata Whenua are protected.</i></p>	<p>Farming permitted The same basic approach to everyday farming activities and associated development as the Rural Production area would apply.</p> <p>Assessment criteria Where subdivision development is applied for, additional assessment criteria would address impacts on the natural character of the coastal environment and the landscape character of the area. These will aim to ensure settlement and urban development is located away from prominent and outstanding coastal areas and the dune lakes. The potential adverse effects of development on the Whangateau Harbour and other ecologically sensitive areas should also be addressed through assessment criteria</p> <p>Development controls The location of buildings and structures as well as the design of subdivision will be controlled with rules to ensure it enhances or protects landscape and local amenity values. Buildings with potential for residential use will be prevented from protruding above significant ridgelines, made to use low-reflectivity colours and surfaces, to incorporate landscape planting to soften the buildings appearance, to have more stringent assessment over a certain size (i.e. 350m² GFA). Reduce the size limit on signs in rural areas and set detailed guidance on circumstances where the approval of the Council will and will not be given for signs to occupy public road verges.</p> <p>Provide for recreation and tourism potential Make provision for activities that compliment rural land uses i.e. restaurants or guest accommodation attached to a winery, a bottling plant attached to olive groves. Allow for a level of visitor services attached to recreational attractions provided they don't detract from the amenity of their location and the quality of the visitor experience.</p> <p>Utility development Very cautious approach to activities like major new quarrying clean filling and intensive farming operations acknowledging the sensitivity of the areas landscape and environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of the high landscape and environmental values in these areas and their proximity to Auckland, there is increasing pressure to subdivide these areas and to develop them in a way that dominates their environment. Retaining the high landscape and environmental values will best enable it to be used to promote a range of production, tourism, recreational and other land use activities. • ARC state of the environment monitoring continues to indicate ongoing issues with land use activities adversely affecting water quality. Around Goat Island there have been increased levels of nitrate and phosphorus, and at Ti Point levels of chlorophyll and phosphorus have risen. While still good quality, the Mahurangi Heads has also declined with continuing sedimentation issues. • Despite the popularity of these areas as visitor destinations changes to the flexibility of the planning regime to affecting Rural Coastal Areas would be helpful in promoting a more diverse sustainable rural economy. • A unique approach can be developed for areas like Kawau Island, Mahurangi and the Dune Lakes to address their unique issues and circumstances.
MOST NOTICABLE DIFFERENCES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional flexibility to accommodate tourist oriented activities consistent with the natural character of the coast and the local area. • Particularly cautious approach to managing future subdivision activity. • Consent process can require development rights from subdivision to be transferred to a suitable receiving site where key outcomes can't be reconciled with development of the site. 		

Mixed Rural Production Environment

Description

Mixed production and lifestyle areas that are relatively intensively subdivided already and are used for purposes other than just large scale agricultural production. These areas contain most of the more versatile soils in the district combined with relatively useable terrain. They are intensively used for lifestyle development as well as commercial farming, horticulture and viticulture. Tourist and visitor related activities and scenic routes also feature in these environments and changing economies. They are attractive, developable and productive areas and also contain quarrying resources and crucial access links necessitating careful and challenging balancing of interests.

Recommended Mixed Rural Production Areas

Includes land between Kaipara Flats and Warkworth and south of Warkworth; between Warkworth Matakana and Point Wells; and land contained within a broad ring around (and excluding) Riverhead forest from SH1 to Wainui, Waitoki, Kaukapakapa, SH16 (excluding some utility sites), Helensville, Waimauku, Huapai, down to Taupaki, Kumeu, Riverhead and the Coatesville Riverhead Highway.

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT

Retain and enhance a strong rural appearance while providing for a range of activities and potential for strong and diverse rural production.

Ribbon development, suburbanisation and development creep from prominent buildings and signage along road sides is avoided.

Mixed rural areas absorb some of the excess subdivision opportunities in the rural area removing development potential from less appropriate locations.

Conflicts between land uses are minimised.

MOST NOTICABLE DIFFERENCES

- 4ha minimum average site size for new sites created through protection of natural area subdivision or transfer of titles into the area.
- Receiving area for titles transferred from other locations.
-

HOW THIS COULD BE DONE

Farming permitted

The same basic approach to everyday farming activities and associated development as the Rural Production area would apply.

Production and lifestyle focus

Acknowledge and address risks to key rural values from fostering diversity of activities in an increasingly lifestyle farming dominated environment and need for careful case by case balancing of issues and objectives.

Strict controls on signs, screen plantings and setback requirements for buildings

Retain a minimum size of site of over 4 ha with any new sites created to retain the potential for future productive use of the land.

Continued rural living opportunities

Subdivision opportunities would only be available through environmental protection such as bush and wetland protection in exchange for development rights (or title rights) or through the use of transferrable title rights (TTR's) (sometimes referred to as development rights) from other areas.

4ha minimum lot size for any TTR based development.

Farm diversification

Reconsider the need for high threshold resource consents for artist studios and galleries beyond the scale of permitted home occupations, for tree nurseries, small scale engineering and boat building, horse training facilities, sale of produce from home occupations, filmmaking, rural services, tourist accommodation, visitor facilities, rural schools and leisure facilities. Acknowledge that the Mixed Rural Environment is a 'production' environment and intensive farming activities should be anticipated.

Utility development

Although extensions to existing utility sites may occur with appropriate mitigation, new utility sites such as major quarrying and clean filling should be discouraged acknowledging the expectations of lifestyle activities in the area.

tailored management approaches continued

WHY THIS APPROACH

- The amenity and rural character of some parts of the mixed production area have been eroded taking on a semi-suburban and in some times semi-commercial character making them more sensitive to the effects of additional development. A 4 ha minimum lot size for new subdivisions will arrest this pattern by retaining remaining rural character and potential for productive use as well as reducing the likelihood of conflicts with productive uses.
- Through careful design and a strong emphasis on sensitive integration of development into rural landscapes, changes to the flexibility of the planning regime to accommodate a range of uses other than agricultural production in these areas would help promote a more diverse and sustainable rural economy.
- Research has demonstrated that lifestyle blocks of 4 hectares and above have a much greater propensity to have some agricultural use; this in turn is likely to result in increased local economic activity and will better protect rural character.
- It is anticipated that the change to the accessibility of northern parts of the district from motorway improvements will mean land between Port Albert and Wellsford will in time have similar characteristics and could also be included.

Rural Lifestyle Environment

Description

Defined areas close to metropolitan Auckland and urban centres with fragmented subdivision patterns that are used primarily for country living with some productive sites and hobby scale farming.

Recommended Country Living Areas

Wellsford, Matakana, Warkworth, Algies Bay, Kaukapakapa, Helensville, Kumeu/Huapai, Puhoi; Stillwater-Dairy Flat-Redvale – Coatesville; Riverhead; Parakai – Helensville; Waimauku (Hinaiu Rd/School Rd and Taylor Rd); south of Riverhead – east of Taupaki

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT	HOW THIS COULD BE DONE	WHY THIS APPROACH
<p><i>Enable a range of rural lifestyle development opportunities and outcomes minimising conflict between lifestyle and non-lifestyle activities and minimising the impact of country living on rural production, the wider rural landscape and the natural environment.</i></p> <p><i>Absorb some of the excess of subdivision opportunities in the rural area removing development potential from less appropriate locations.</i></p> <p><i>Avoid the expected growth paths of urban settlements, areas with sensitive environmental and landscape values, areas highly suitable for production and important utility sites.</i></p> <p><i>Ribbon development, suburbanisation, urban creep and prominent signage along road sides is avoided.</i></p>	<p>Subdivision potential sink Potential to subdivide down to 1 or 2 ha minimum average site sizes⁴ by extinguishing a title in a Rural Production Environment for each site created.</p> <p>Smaller minimum site sizes can be created where there is sufficient area for on-site effluent disposal, road setbacks and sufficient living space for a rural environment, provided the overall intensity of development is not exceeded.</p> <p>Default potential to subdivide down to 4 ha sites provided subdivision incorporates protection of any existing natural features or key rural landscape elements.</p> <p>Non-intrusive diversification Provide for and actively plan for very small scale retailing, child care facilities, sports facilities, schools and other rural service delivery activities.</p> <p>Change the non-complying status of a range of rural activities that are prevented in countryside living zones such as horse riding facilities, wineries and visitor accommodation to emphasise the potential of these areas for more highly capitalised specialist production compatible with lifestyle development.</p> <p>Integrated Development Planning Opportunities to rearrange subdivision capacity within an area to cluster houses away from natural features, sensitive views and or the best areas for production to improve development outcomes.</p> <p>Clear lifestyle focus Prohibition of major utilities particularly major quarrying and clean fill activities and no provision for intensive farming.</p> <p>Strong protection of trees, bush and water bodies Removal of significant natural features to be limited to the minimum necessary for a dwelling and driveway.</p> <p>Avoid suburban street infrastructure where practicable to retain the country look and feel of these more settled environments.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The discrepancy between the development potential of rural land in and out of the current Countryside Living Zones make it a “holy grail” zoning sought after through interminable and expensive litigation. Hopes of huge potential windfalls increases the extent of property speculation in rural areas which in turn has flow on effects on land values, rates and therefore the viability of farming. Requiring more significant environmental benefits to be provided in these areas in return for subdivision rights (albeit of a different nature to those in other areas) is considered a better more consistent approach to sustainable management. Demand for a wider range of activities in rural lifestyle environments is becoming more evident as the settlement in areas matures and the communities within them become less insular. Not all demand for country living can be met while retaining the things that people value about Rodney’s rural areas. While it is acknowledged that farming in much of district relies on off-site income that does not make lifestyle development the only or best long term land use option. Although well cared for lifestyle blocks are a welcomed aspect of Rodney’s character, too much rural residential development prevents the efficient use of land that is potentially productive, erodes the rural economy, creates inefficient transport patterns and erodes the pleasant open nature of rural areas. Tailored overlays can be developed for areas like Taupaki and Matakana to reflect their different roles as green buffer areas and settlement edges which share the same essential country living focus.
MOST NOTICABLE DIFFERENCES		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entitlement to subdivide to small site sizes without providing environmental benefits is gone. Scope for a broader range of complimentary activities and rural production. 		

⁴ Where 1, 2 or 4 ha becomes the minimum site size will depend on a more detailed study of the ability of these areas to absorb development at this intensity and achieve objectives for the area.

Bush Living Areas

Description

Areas of land containing extensive private areas of existing and developing natural areas that would be problematic to farm and are in suitable locations for low key bush residential lifestyle development without the degree of site modification and scale of development often seen in rural lifestyle environments.

Recommended Bush Living Areas

The bush clad low density island residential areas on the western side of Kawau Island; Bush clad land between Hibiscus Coast Highway and Fowler Access Road and Waiwera River; and Land north of Hatfields Beach east of SH1 including Hatfields Peninsula; Area of bush and scattered farmland around Goldie's Bush, and Te Henga wetland north of Bethells Road South of Muriwai and Oaio Road and west of Arrowsmith Road; Land within the Okura Catchment draining into the Long Bay/Okura Marine Reserve including parts of Albany Heights and Glenvar; A master planned largely clustered form of bush living with retention of large single areas of forestry and bush planned for Weiti Forest Park.

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT

To provide for bush residential lifestyle development where such development does not cause adverse impacts on areas of native vegetation and fauna habitat.

Suburbanisation, urban creep, intensive rural production and prominent signage along road sides is avoided.

HOW THIS COULD BE DONE

Subdivision through protection of natural areas only.

Subdivision limited to the creation of sites suitable for small footprint low intensity residential development controlling their location position, number and size so as to avoid significant destruction of significant native bush and natural features.

Subdivision through bush and wetland protection with a lower default yield of 1 site for every 4 hectares of bush, or 2ha of wetland with a lower threshold for higher benefits (see 4.4.2 Reset Subdivision Benefit Ratios for details).

No opportunities for TTR's provided for in these areas.

Assessment criteria

Where subdivision and development proposals are applied for, additional assessment criteria would address impacts on the landscape character of the area, on native vegetation and biodiversity, requiring inappropriate development to be transferred to a suitable location or refused. These will aim to ensure settlement and urban development is very carefully integrated alongside, or located away from sensitive natural areas.

Development controls

The location of buildings and structures as well as the design of subdivision will be controlled with rules to ensure necessary earthworks and vegetation removal and waste disposal has a minimal impact on the environment.

Buildings with potential for residential use will be prevented from protruding above significant ridgelines, made to use low-reflectivity colours and surfaces, to incorporate landscape planting to soften the buildings appearance, to have more stringent assessment over a certain size.

Signs to be discrete, low key and simple.

Bush to be strongly protected but with an opportunity to remove up to 500m² for a dwelling and driveway.

Bush living focus

Prohibition of major quarrying and clean fill activities and no provision for intensive farming.

Bush clearance is strictly limited to retain and enhance the bushclad character.

Activities which would require bush removal, the formation of more than a minimal road network, or would generate adverse effects on the local environment are not provided for.

Utility development

Preventative approach to activities like major new quarrying, clean filling and intensive farming operations acknowledging the sensitivity of the areas landscape and environment.

MOST NOTICABLE DIFFERENCES

- Subdivision through bush and wetland protection with smaller bush and wetland areas needing to be protected in order to obtain an entitlement to subdivide than in other areas.
- Incentives to retire areas from farming and to transfer out titles produced from environmental enhancement subdivision.
- No objectives and policies promoting and protecting agricultural production.
- No opportunity for receiving TTR's.

WHY THIS APPROACH

- In some areas a focus on facilitating farming activities common to other rural areas is difficult to reconcile with objectives seeking to protect high value natural areas where bush is (or is becoming) the predominant land cover.
- These are areas where some further subdivision is less problematic in terms of impacts on traffic patterns, infrastructure and effects on open landscapes; but needs to be carefully balanced with the need to avoid adverse impacts on areas of native vegetation and fauna habitat.
- In most cases titles generated from protected bush are best developed away from any natural areas on a site to avoid such impact. Where this is not practicable and where development of the site is likely to destroy or degrade important habitats, the entitlement to develop (or “title right”) should be able to be transferred to another less sensitive development site.
- Low intensity and carefully designed bush living that minimises the length of access roads and the size of building platforms (that break up habitats and allow more weed spreading, light and pest penetration and drying of the bush to occur), can however be appropriate. Living in bush areas can promote active involvement in improving the bush habitat through planting and pest and weed management, to an extent that is not possible with remote pockets of habitat.
- A unique approach can be development for areas like Weiti Forest Park and Kawau Island settlement area to provide for their unique issues and circumstances. There are a number of other areas which could potentially benefit with this approach. Sandspit whilst displaying some characteristics consistent with Bush Living areas is zoned for lower density residential purposes, with site sizes below that anticipated in Rural areas. As such a rural zone is not appropriate but strengthening the bush provisions in the residential zones may be.

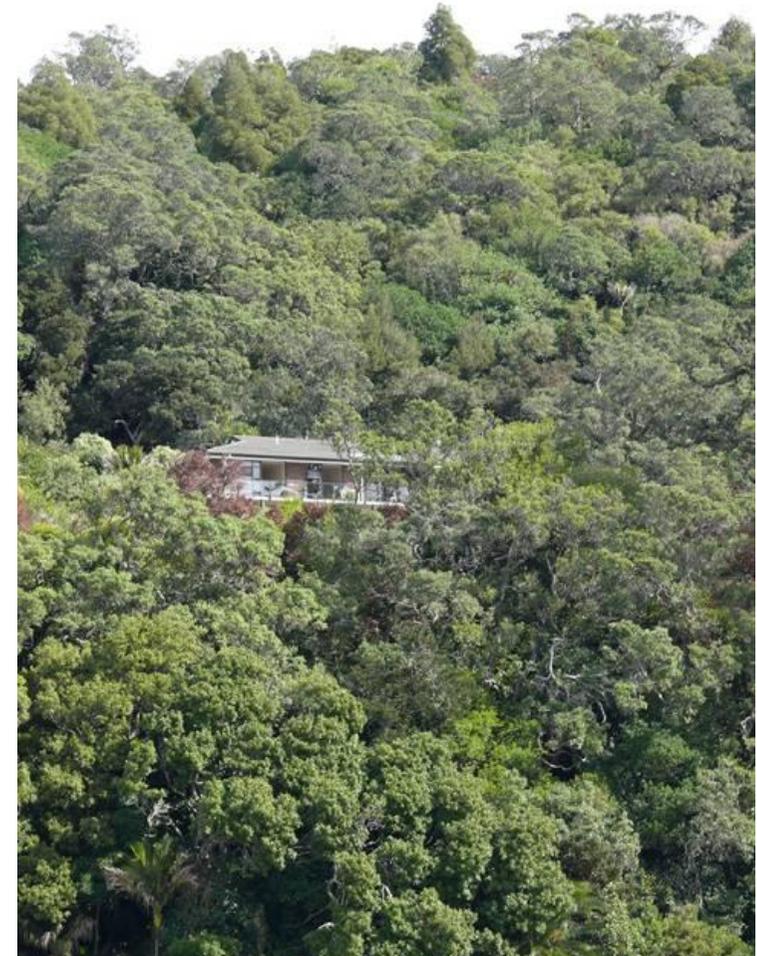


Figure 12. House in mature Waiwera bush, Patrick Corfe Landscape Architects 2010

Although the introduction of settlement into bush areas can degrade these areas, low levels of well managed bush living is a part of the diversity of rural living options considered able to achieve good outcomes for communities and the environment in Rodney.

Island Environments

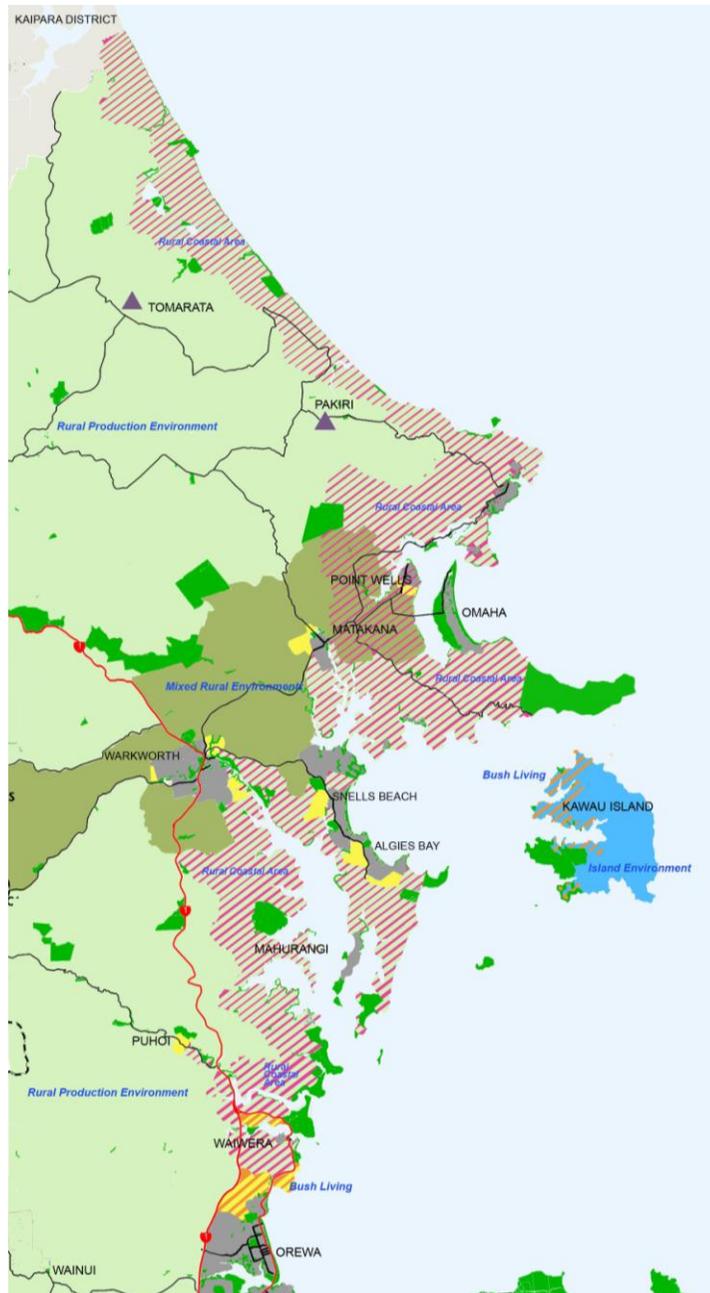
Description

A specific set of management approaches are envisaged for the islands off the coast of Rodney, the largest and most populous and accessible of which is Kawau Island.

Kawau Island has two distinct areas with a more densely settled coastal margin on the west and the sparsely populated remainder.

Other Islands with a more remote nature have very low levels of settlement and activity provided for and the significance of wildlife habitat and landscape values are emphasised.

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT	HOW THIS COULD BE DONE	WHY THIS APPROACH
<p><i>To achieve greater consistency in the planning framework applied across comparable islands of the Hauraki Gulf.</i></p> <p><i>To give effect to the key concepts in the Kawau Island Vision 2009.</i></p> <p><i>To retain the natural coastal character of Kawau Island and protect it from inappropriate subdivision and development in accordance with the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement and the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act.</i></p> <p><i>Activities on other islands are limited to those occurring already around conservation, restoration and recreation.</i></p>	<p>Island Settlement Area Recognise the near-urban intensity of development patterning in a vehicle free natural coastal context where “low key” island living is an important local value using a Kawau specific Bush Living overlay.</p> <p>Island Rural Area Continue to restrict farming and forestry and apply appropriate rules to protect the natural coastal character of the Island Rural Environment and the important ecological values of the area.</p> <p>Manage Subdivision Managing the ability to relocate boundaries and subdivide and create new titles to ensure that the effects of development on the unique character of Kawau Island and on the coastal environment are no more than minor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To recognise the two distinct areas on Kawau, one of which is heavily subdivided and settled compared with other rural areas within the coastal environment, the other which is unpopulated (but privately owned area) with significant albeit highly modified habitat potential and valued landscape and coastal characteristics. • To achieve consistency in the planning framework applied across the district and Hauraki Gulf. • To ensure that the natural character of the coastal environment is preserved and protected. • The intensity of development allowed in the Settlement Area has been described by the Environment Court in recent decisions concerning as overly “generous” given the context of the bush clad coastal island environment.
<p>MOST NOTICABLE DIFFERENCES</p>		
<p>See above.</p>		



Proposed Management Areas

- Rural Production Environment
- Mixed Rural Production Environment
- Rural Lifestyle Environment
- Rural Coastal Area
- Bush Living Area
- Islands Environment
- Subject to potential village expansion and/or diversification

Unaffected Existing District Plan Zones

- Open Space Zones
- Urban Zones

Figure 13. Proposed North Rodney Management Areas

NOTES

Outstanding Landscapes and Ecological Areas will require further analysis and may result in additional controls (see Figures 8A, 8B and 8C).

Due to the 'high level concept approach' of the Rural Strategy the detail of mapped areas is indicative rather than definitive, and the detail will need to be confirmed before being implemented, through District Plan processes. For example, better definition of constraints such as flood hazard/sensitivity may result in changes.



Proposed Management Areas

- Rural Production Environment
- Mixed Rural Production Environment
- Rural Lifestyle Environment
- Rural Coastal Area
- Bush Living Area
- Islands Environment
- Subject to potential village expansion and/or diversification

Unaffected Existing District Plan Zones

- Open Space Zones
- Urban Zones

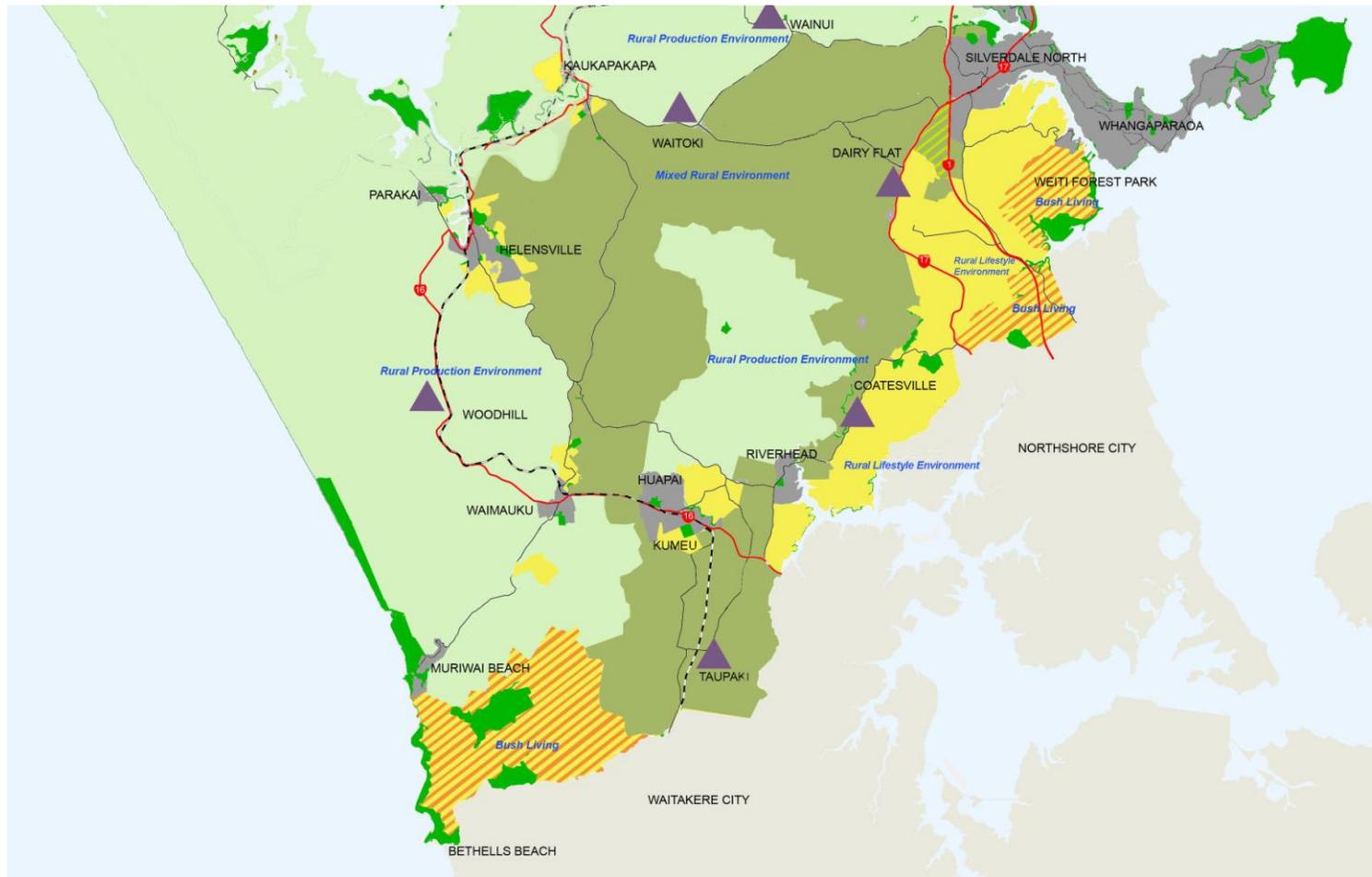
Figure 14. Proposed West Rodney Management Areas

NOTES

Outstanding Landscapes and Ecological Areas will require further analysis and may result in additional controls (see Figures 8A, 8B and 8C).

Due to the 'high level concept approach' of the Rural Strategy the detail of mapped areas is indicative rather than definitive, and the detail will need to be confirmed before being implemented through District Plan processes. For example better definition of constraints such as flood hazard/sensitivity may result in changes.

The Kaipara Harbour and West Coast Area Overlay has not been identified on this Figure as the extent of this area needs to be determined in the future through District Plan processes.



Proposed Management Areas

- Rural Production Environment
- Mixed Rural Production Environment
- Rural Lifestyle Environment
- Rural Coastal Area
- Bush Living Area
- Islands Environment
- Future possible industrial land
- Subject to potential village expansion and/or diversification

Unaffected Existing District Plan Zones

- Open Space Zones
- Urban Zones

NOTES

Outstanding Landscapes and Ecological Areas will require further analysis and may result in additional controls (see Figures 8A, 8B and 8C).

Due to the 'high level concept approach' of the Rural Strategy the detail of mapped areas is indicative rather than definitive, and the detail will need to be confirmed before being implemented. For example, better definition of constraints such as flood hazard/sensitivity may result in changes.

The Kaipara Harbour and West Coast Area Overlay has not been identified on this Figure as the extent of this area needs to be determined in the future through District Plan processes.

The future possible industrial land identified, is subject to the outcome of a structure plan process. Council has also informally identified an area of future business land to the north of this area across State Highway 17 to serve the longer term needs of the area.

Figure 15. Proposed Southern Rodney Management Areas

5.2 SPECIFIC INITIATIVES – FACILITATING A SUSTAINABLE RURAL ECONOMY

5.2.1 Where we are now

- Rodney is typical of other rural districts with large numbers of small businesses, owner operators and home occupations acting as a mainstay of its local economy. Where it differs markedly, is in the large numbers of rural and urban residents who travel large distances within and out of the district for work, learning, recreation and shopping.
- Standing out amongst the rural economic trends in Rodney is the 75% increase in the number of lifestyle farms in the district from 1993 – 2008. 6,252 lifestyle farms has become 10,942 at an average rate of 360 properties per year, at a rate of approximately 100 agricultural properties lost each year.
- The population growth in the rural areas of 840 persons a year between 1991 and 2006 has brought money into the district with increased construction spending and employment in construction (98% construction sector employment growth 2000-2007); while land values of occupied lifestyle properties increased over 700%.
- Other beneficiaries in this growth include the hospitality and the property/business services sectors which grew employment by 60% and 64% respectively. During the same time period employment in agriculture forestry and fishing combined increased by only 3%.

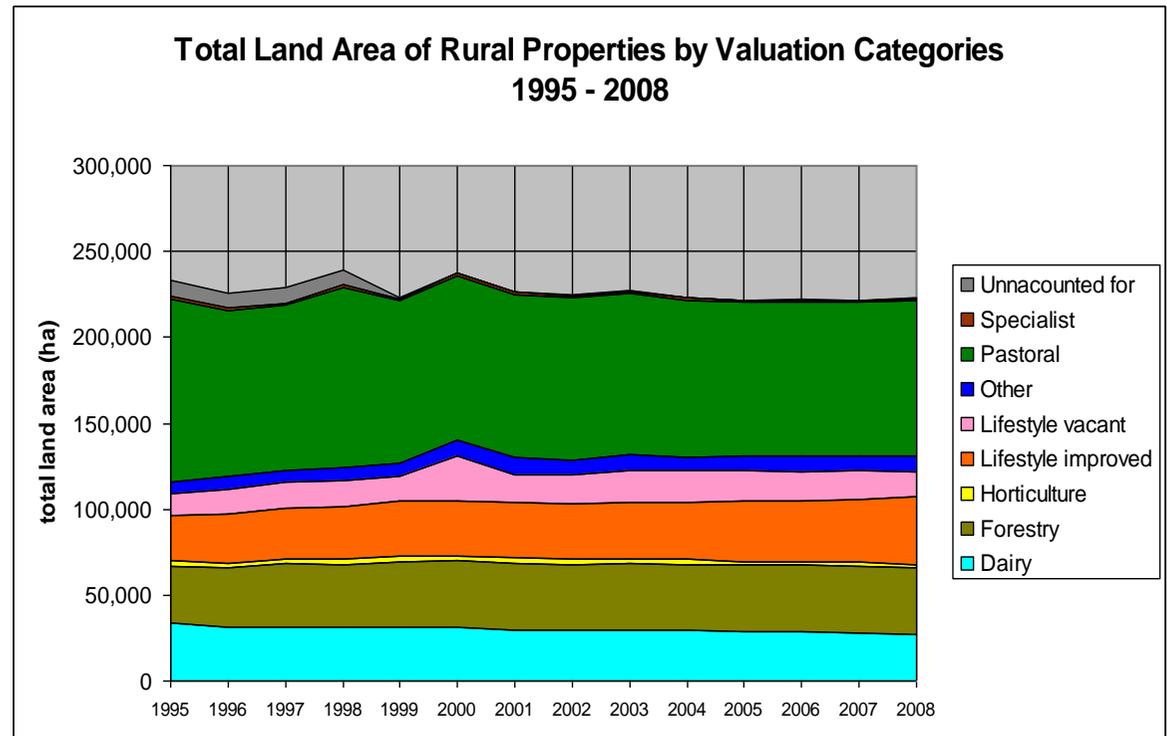


Figure 16. No of Properties in Rural Land Use Categories 1995 – 2008, Property IQ 2009



5.2.2 Key Actions – Branding and Promotion

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT	HOW THIS COULD BE DONE	WHY THIS APPROACH
<p><i>Rodney district becomes renowned for its outstanding lifestyle, environment and rural culture.</i></p> <p><i>Rodney becomes a leading centre for sustainable local agricultural production and good land management practice.</i></p> <p><i>Rodney becomes renowned for the cooperative working relationship of the Council with its rural community and related organisations.</i></p> <p><i>Relevant objectives from Living Vision for Rodney's Economy include a high-growth, vibrant and proactive tourism sector; a well branded and recognised tourism destination; more exports and increased local sales, more products and services; collaborative and productive economic sectors.</i></p>	<p>Local Branding Develop a distinctive brand for the district that embraces its outstanding lifestyle opportunities, attractive environments and varying rural cultures. Promote the brand concept relentlessly through leadership, media marketing, corporate communications and partnerships utilising the ability of businesses to move fast and generate followers and the ability of schools to shape values. Actively facilitate virtuous cycles between tourism and high value niche production activities.</p> <p>Promote Sustainability Promoting the potential of the rural areas of the district for sustainable agricultural production, food-mile reduction, sustainable rural settlement and agri-tourism in addition to ideas like an organics cluster, a marine cluster, a sustainable energy cluster. Continue to promote features such as local farmers markets, farm gate sale of produce</p> <p>Rural Leaders Up in Lights Promotion and assistance for “torch bearers” for sustainable agriculture, for exporting, for successful and innovative growers and rural businesses, craftsmen and women, creative and artistic endeavours, as well as for farmers markets and agricultural events that promote the districts rural sector directly to the public.</p> <p>Self Promotion Promoting agricultural and ecological preservation initiatives of the Council such as riparian planting grants, farming friendly policy, as well as positive initiatives by other agencies and individuals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas and real life examples can be immensely powerful and engaging. People and businesses can be far more successful in affecting positive change and boosting confidence than a Council's power to make policy and effect regulatory changes and streamline its processes. • The challenges of partnering and community building in such a large and contrasting district could be exacerbated in a more distant and more urban dominated Council requiring whole organisational commitment to address.
<p>MOST NOTICEABLE DIFFERENCES</p>		
<p>As above</p>		

5.2.3 Key Actions – Farming Friendly Practices and Culture

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT	HOW THIS COULD BE DONE	WHY THIS APPROACH
<p><i>Farming friendly organisational culture set at the top is followed through by subsidiary organisations and staff.</i></p> <p><i>People in the district have greater certainty about what to expect from Council and expectations of Council from lifestyle and farmers about balancing competing interests and values are realistic.</i></p> <p><i>Council decision making is well informed and practical.</i></p> <p><i>Consistent and reasonable approach to rural issues by various parts of the Council.</i></p> <p><i>Collaborative approaches to managing rural issues are adopted wherever possible.</i></p>	<p>‘Farming Friendly’ Policy Adopt a Council wide “farming friendly” set of policy directives as part of Memorandum of Understanding’s (MOU’s) with appropriate farmer and landowners representative groups.</p> <p>Identify preservation of farming forestry and horticulture in the district as a long term strategic goal of the Council.</p> <p>Support rural development that delivers diverse and sustainable farming enterprises, contribute to rural economies and promote recreation in and enjoyment of the countryside.</p> <p>Make undertakings to minimise conflict between farming activities, council agencies and abutting land uses; and to work collaboratively together.</p> <p>Agree a process for addressing disputes over matters such as crop and weed spraying, stock movements etc. that acknowledges that a “right to farm” in a responsible way is an important value in the district.</p> <p>Take a proactive response to District Plan anomalies which affect rural businesses i.e. commercial wine production is provided for in most rural areas while beer brewing is non-complying etc.</p> <p>Use relevant expertise Engage policy adviser resources with practical experience in farming dedicated to providing input into Council decision making, policy making and enforcement action in relation to farming.</p> <p>Information Issue new residents and real estate agents with pamphlets on things to expect from living in a working rural area as part of everyday life including animal noise, smells, dust, the operation of machinery and slow moving vehicles and animals on roads.</p> <p>Partnerships Work in partnership with rural industries to promote best practice in matters such as sustainable land and water management, while requiring a lifting of minimum standards over time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses in Rodney cited roading improvements and road sealing, town centre upgrades, and reducing consent times as things Council could do to help local businesses. Compliance costs were amongst the greatest concerns of rural residents. • Rodney District Council has benefitted from people with strong rural backgrounds serving in numbers as Councillors. Partnering and community building in an organisation as large and distant as the Auckland Council will require great commitment to meaningful engagement with different parts of the rural community. Input of dedicated staff with farming experience into plan making, consenting and enforcement decision making may be necessary to fill any knowledge and experience gaps in the new Council.
<p>MOST NOTICEABLE DIFFERENCES</p>		
<p>As above</p>		

5.3.2 Key Initiatives – Growing Rural Communities

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT	HOW THIS COULD BE DONE	WHY THIS APPROACH
<p><i>People who live or work in rural areas have reasonable access to a range of services and facilities.</i></p> <p><i>Away from larger urban areas new development involving housing is focused in, or next to, existing towns and villages.</i></p> <p><i>Where greenfield land is developed it is not used wastefully.</i></p> <p><i>Opportunities for planning the Auckland City's town and country areas concurrently makes provision for appropriate leisure opportunities for urban and rural residents.</i></p>	<p>Structure Planning rural villages and their surrounds</p> <p>Planning Rodney sets out a number of 'towns under pressure' that require a precautionary management focus and as such may not be suitable for expansion, these include Matakana, Snells Algies, Puhoi, Waiwera, Kaukapakapa, Huapai and Riverhead. It also identifies rural community service villages as a focus of parks and reserves expenditure, as receptors for urban activities, service facilities and for residential expansion within physical and infrastructure constraints. In many instances it may be appropriate to diversify existing land within a village to accommodate a wider range of land uses such as cafe's or general stores, as opposed to expanding the village. The following locations are identified as being suitable for growing in either intensity, diversity, or in size as is most approach, through a careful, objective and collaborative approach to place making:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural service towns which may (subject to structure planning processes) be subject to considerable further growth. The list should include – Snells Beach/Algies Bay, Matakana, Riverhead, Waimauku, Waiwera and Kaukapakapa. Rural service villages which may be subject to some growth and/or diversification but will generally be retained as small contained villages. The list should include – Kaipara Flats, Puhoi, Tomorata, Coatesville, Pakiri, Tapora, Tauhoa, Wainui, Dairy Flat, Taupaki, Waitoki and Woodhill. <p>Prior to the expansion/diversification of any of the above rural community service villages, a structure plan process or process of adopting a 'community vision' should be undertaken to determine the extent, location, density and any key controls appropriate to the proposed expansion/diversification within physical and infrastructure constraints.</p> <p>Hamlets were considered as a tool for Growing Rural Communities as part of the rural strategy and were considered inappropriate and undesirable through the hearing process, however the option of transferring titles out of the rural protection areas is retained.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The levels of population growth predicted in the Auckland Region and to the popularity of country living mean that not all demand for rural living can be met if the key things people value about rural areas are to be maintained. The rural areas of the district are large enough to absorb considerable population growth however it is inevitable that subdivision and development opportunities in the district will become scarce over time. Both the district and the wider Northland and Auckland region can benefit from realising some of this settlement demand within centres and outside of the districts rural areas. The prosperity of rural villages in the district is inextricably linked to the functioning of rural communities and by proxy to associated areas of the district. Resources for structure planning to promote place making and to manage growth of settlements in partnership with communities must not be monopolised by high growth urban centres and its devolution to the Local Boards of the district will be critical for achieving sustainable management of rural areas. Council facilitated structure planning allows for an objective approach to growth planning, environmental management and infrastructure planning to be undertaken together in a process with a high degree of interaction with interested and affected parties.
<p>MOST NOTICEABLE DIFFERENCES</p>		
<p>As above.</p>		

5.4 SPECIFIC INITIATIVES – SUBDIVISION AND NATURAL AREA PROTECTION

5.4.1 Where we are now

Council's have a legal duty to protect highly valued natural resources. Subdivision incentives have historically been the focus of Council's approach to protecting such areas in the district. Up to 10,000m² of native bush can be removed per year as a permitted activity regardless of its age, quality or conservation values provided it has no special legal protections attached.

Most indigenous forest and almost all wetlands in the district have been lost but significant areas remain (approximately 22,934 ha of indigenous forest, 16,698 ha of scrublands and 7,131 ha of wetland). There are still around 13,557 ha of the 22,282 ha (61%) of identified significant natural areas and many more natural areas of lesser quality in private ownership in the district with no permanent legal protection.

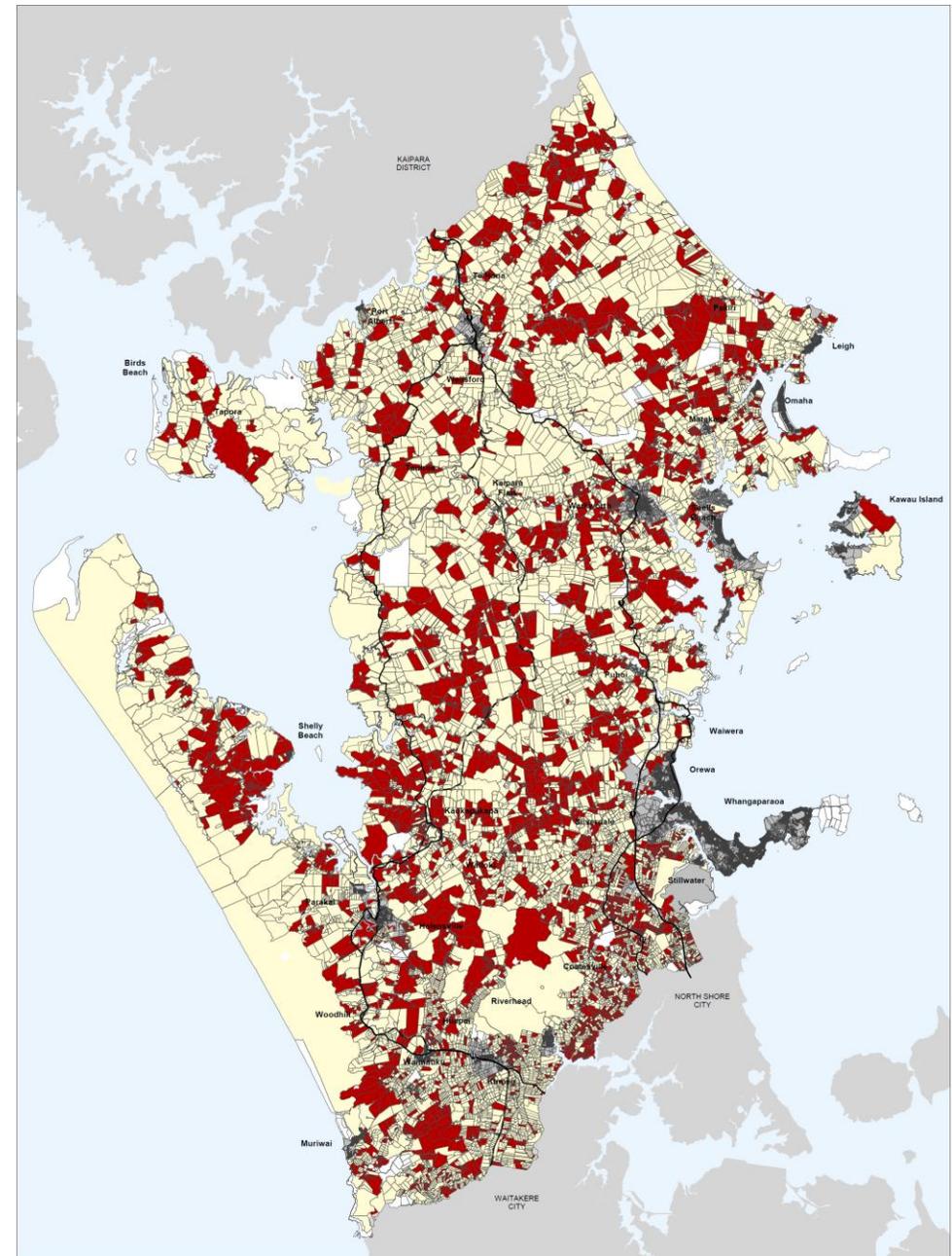
The opportunity to subdivide and develop by protecting small areas of bush and wetlands has been used so extensively (with over 4,000 areas in the district now covenanted) that the down sides of the sporadic development associated with this now seems to outweigh the associated benefits in many cases.

Council's experience suggests applications involving bush and wetlands of limited ecological value are frequently being put forward due to the nature of the associated subdivision standards and assessment criteria.

Compliance with legal covenants and associated resource consent conditions attached to protection of natural area subdivisions is also a significant issue. Sample monitoring in 2007 that is likely to be similar in other parts of the district found:

- varying covenant types with varying levels of obligations and enforceability ranging from simple bush protection covenants with a bond of as little as \$2,000, to complex RMA covenants which stipulate detailed requirements for avoiding harming the bush, pest and weed management, establishment and maintenance of stock-proof fencing, and responsibility to pay for monitoring by Council every 2 years;
- varying understanding & awareness of bushlots and associated obligations ranging from complete ignorance to exceeding legal requirements; and
- less than a third of the bushlots surveyed in a good state of condition.

Figure 19. Rural Properties Subdivided between Jan 2000 – Feb 2009 (red shaded sites), RDC GIS 2009. The same study showed over 4,100 sites that could have a dwelling put on them without needing a resource consent.



5.4.2 Key Changes – Reset Subdivision Benefit Ratios

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT	HOW THIS COULD BE DONE
<p><i>The long term environmental benefits of protecting natural areas balance or outweigh the adverse effects associated with the resulting subdivision.</i></p> <p><i>The strategy to secure protection and enhancement of highly valued natural resources focuses on connecting and adding to networks of natural areas.</i></p> <p><i>The numbers of new protected areas are manageable enough to allow effective monitoring and enforcement of conditions.</i></p>	<p>Prevent subdivisions involving unviable natural area fragments Default subdivision yield ratio of 1 site for each 10ha of good bush and 1 site for each 0.5ha of natural wetland with exceptions for defined high value ecological benefits.</p> <p>Subdivision yield for protecting 2-12ha of bush can occur when the natural area⁵:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) has SNA or similar recognition, or (b) has a 20m+ wide connection with an area of permanently protected bush or regenerating vegetation of over 10 ha, or 0.5 ha of natural wetland , or (c) has a 20m+ connection with bush or wetlands with SNA or similar recognition, or (d) involves riparian planting of a perennial natural watercourse with minimum 200m length and 20m width on each side. <p>Subdivision for protecting 0.5-5.5ha natural wetlands can occur when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the wetland area has a fenced 20m+ perimeter buffering of suitable existing bush or native revegetation. <p>Encourage comprehensive planning of large areas No limit on the number of sites per application.</p> <p>Require benefits to be current Reduce the license provided by the bush and wetland assessment guidelines to rely on future improvements and ensure areas being protected in exchange for subdivision are reasonable quality habitat at the time of approval.</p>
MOST NOTICABLE DIFFERENCES	
<p>Subdivisions will require areas that are well connected enough and large enough to be viable functioning natural ecosystems to be provided in return for development rights.</p> <p>Less reliance on highly uncertain potential for areas to improve their characteristics over time.</p> <p>Significant natural areas are protected for their intrinsic values – not just via subdivision.</p>	<p>Stewardship incentives Develop guidelines for sustainable low-impact forestry and native plant harvesting within protected areas in order to encourage better stewardship.</p> <p>Monitoring and enforcement Implement ways to improve, monitor, enforce, and recoup the costs associated with achieving compliance with covenants and consent conditions relating to environmental works and conservation.</p> <p>Control subverting of rules with boundary relocations Remove the current ability to divide areas of bush and wetland through boundary relocations that increase the number of sites that the protection of the bush can generate and reduce the size of protected areas.</p> <p>Raise the pass mark for natural areas Amend the current definition of bush to preclude subdivision for protection of scrub in exotic forestry blocks. Amend the current definition of a wetland to more clearly preclude subdivision for man made wetlands with little or no habitat values for aquatic species.</p> <p>Give titles once established Require completion certificate for significant land rehabilitation subdivision before titles are issued in the same way that they are for significant enhancement planting subdivision.</p>

⁵ Additional sites would have to provide 10 further hectares of bush for every new site or 5 hectares of wetland for every new site

WHY THIS APPROACH

- Although the permanent protection of any natural areas will have some ecological and visual benefits, it is counter productive and unsustainable to continue to become responsible for ensuring protecting a plethora of natural areas that are variously: too small to support species other than the limited range of bush fringe specialists, disconnected from other areas of habitat, a catalyst for rural residential development in remote and sensitive areas, beset with weed and pest infestations, of limited value at the time of subdivision.
- Diminishing sliding scale yields for natural area protection subdivision encourages repeat piecemeal applications where the whole development is never properly considered.
- The current district plan approach allows a great deal of weight to be placed on the potential for the values of protected areas to eventually improve to a suitable standard. Such improvements often do not occur as promised and the gap between the promised benefits and the effects of development is a cost to the environment and the wider community.

Figure 20. The outcomes of carefully designed development in areas with sensitive natural areas and ecosystems can be better than those of agricultural production; but a more targeted approach is recommended for these subdivision opportunities to maximise benefits and limit proliferation of “ad hoc” development; Bethels Beach, Melean Absolum Ltd 2008.



5.4.3 Key Changes – Other Rural Subdivision Opportunities

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT	HOW THIS COULD BE DONE	WHY THIS APPROACH
<p><i>Resolve confusion about the different approaches to subdivision in the Countryside Living Rural and Countryside Living Town zones.</i></p> <p><i>Get clarity on long term objectives for acquiring esplanade reserves in specific areas.</i></p> <p><i>Provide an appropriate incentive and mechanism to allow the retirement of land uses with significant adverse effects into uses with better long term environmental outcomes.</i></p> <p>MOST NOTICABLE DIFFERENCES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same approach to subdivision in different Rural Lifestyle Environments but using different (place specific) minimum site sizes. • More opportunities for subdivision through provision of esplanade reserves. 	<p>Subdivision of Countryside Living Town and Rural Sites Apply different controls such as minimum site sizes to Rural Lifestyle Environments in different locations (i.e. a buffer area between a rural town and the countryside will be different to an area forming part of Auckland’s green belt).</p> <p>Require Conservation Subdivision Plans identifying features and areas to be protected from development for subdivisions in all Rural Lifestyle Environments.</p> <p>Subdivision for the Creation of Esplanade Reserves Scoping and incorporating further esplanade reserves as future acquisitions is required to ensure that important future recreational benefits are not lost.</p> <p>Subdivision for Significant Land Rehabilitation and Significant Enhancement Planting Although slightly different these opportunities allow sites to be subdivided in return for large areas of native revegetation with a yield of 1 new site for each area of 6 - 10 hectares of replanted bush. The opportunity is capped at 5 sites per application in most circumstances to prevent it being used to create significant new settlements in unsuitable locations.</p> <p>Analysis of the outcomes of the current District Plan for the rural strategy have not highlighted an urgent need to change the current approaches to Creation of Additional Public Reserve Land and Subdivision for Household Unit Sites on Maori Land.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The outcomes of the Countryside Living Town and Rural zones in the Current District Plan and the package of rules and policies used to manage them seem to be very similar apart from areas where the predominant site sizes are close to 1 ha compared with areas where the predominant site sizes are well over 2 ha. These differences may not justify a separate zone however different minimum site sizes are considered necessary to differentiate the character of more rural places like Taupaki from Rural Lifestyle Environments on the urban edge of Matakana. • A review of existing Esplanade Reserves shows a number of areas within the District where intermittent sections of esplanade reserves have been obtained, the usefulness of which would be hugely increased by obtaining the missing sections. Relatively few esplanade areas of the district are listed in the District Plan as desirable esplanade reserve acquisitions. When subdivisions provide opportunities for esplanade reserves to be obtained it is sometimes uncertain if the Council should obtain the reserve. • Although Significant Enhancement Planting and Land Rehabilitation subdivision opportunities create potential for many thousands of new sites to be created in many rural areas where significant levels of development would be undesirable and problematic, a highly precautionary framework for assessing and deciding the acceptability of such proposals and the high cost and long timescales for implementing such developments is expected to prevent more than a fraction of this potential development from occurring. • On balance the potential advantages of providing an incentive and mechanism to allow the retirement of unsustainable land uses into large native revegetation schemes paid for by rural residential development (provided such developments are limited in scale and carefully designed and managed), should outweigh the risks associated with allowing subdivision and development in remote and sensitive areas.

5.5.2 Key Changes – Identify Landscapes and Manage Development

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT	HOW THIS COULD BE DONE
<p>Protect outstanding and locally significant natural landscapes from subdivision and development with significant adverse effects.</p> <p>Protect locally significant view shafts from public areas including roads.</p> <p>Enhance locally significant rural landscapes and protect them from inappropriate subdivision and development.</p>	<p>Universal basic protections Apply basic bulk and location development to buildings and developments to limit effects on neighbours and the surrounding area in all rural zones.</p> <p>Identify suitable areas as outstanding landscapes Identify suitable areas as outstanding landscapes in planning maps in areas with the following attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very high natural character areas – coastal areas and their associated landward setting and distinctive landforms with high quality mature indigenous forest remnants such as the Dome and Tamahanga hills, Moirs Hill and Dark Summit, Mt Auckland; • Prominent areas and headlands that are visible from commonly accessed public areas for kilometres around providing important rural landscape backdrops. <p>Identify suitable areas as district amenity landscapes Identify suitable areas as district amenity landscapes in areas with the following attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinctive and elevated areas that are remarkable within the district for features such as being striking or unusual geological forms such as Dome Range and Woodhill Forest; • Prominent elevated ridgelines that are visible from commonly accessed public areas such as Pukematakeo ridge north of Matakana; <p>Control the effects of buildings in all significant landscapes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand existing controls on new residential buildings on ridgelines in certain areas to identified significant prominent ridges over a certain elevation in all rural areas (i.e. 150m RL); • Require that buildings are located so they don't "stick out" in the landscape on prominent sites where practicable; • Require new buildings in identified outstanding landscapes to be painted in naturalistic low-reflectivity colours and use predominantly low reflective surfaces, tinted driveways, regressed cuts and to incorporate landscape planting to soften the buildings appearance; <p>Limit New Development in Outstanding Landscapes Focus on assessing the appropriateness of building locations, controlling the amount of new sites and the number of potential buildings in that landscape context at subdivision stage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require a more stringent assessment of residential development over a certain size (i.e. 350m² GFA) in identified outstanding landscapes which includes requirements to minimise the extent of landform modification and the prominence of buildings. <p>Identify and manage rural landscapes under pressure Use building set backs, signage controls, landscaping requirements and a precautionary approach to the approval of subdivisions and commercial development along rural roads to reduce the impact of any new development in these areas. Land on the northern side of Rodney Rd serving as a backdrop to the wider Pakiri area; the south head area, land south of Mahurangi West Road and the State Highway road corridors between Westgate and Kumeu, south of Warkworth, south of Silverdale as high profile rural areas under particular pressure.</p> <p>Identify suitable areas as locally significant view shafts</p> <p>Rural Design Guide Commission detailed guidance specific to different landscape settings within the district for designers, home owners and planners assessing applications on ways to integrate buildings sensitively in the landscape, locally appropriate approaches to landscaping and design for better sustainability.</p>
MOST NOTICABLE DIFFERENCES	
<p>Strong controls on all buildings and development would be focused on identified outstanding landscapes.</p> <p>The prominence of locations for new residential buildings would be managed on identified prominent ridges over 150m RL only.</p>	

WHY THIS APPROACH

- Council's analysis and public feedback are aligned in suggesting the naturalness and quality of many important landscapes in the district is being diminished by subdivision and development.
- The Rural Strategy has identified that there are landscapes outside nationally and regionally designated areas that are particularly highly valued locally.
- The RMA allows for adverse effects to be remedied or mitigated when they can't be avoided. Well thought out building locations, massing, materials, and colours in addition to judicious landscape planting can considerably reduce potential effects while allowing views and attractive architecture.
- Local landscape designations should be based on a formal and robust assessment of the qualities of the landscape concerned and should only be used where it can be shown that criteria-based policies cannot provide the necessary protection. District Plan documents should state what it is that requires extra protection, and why.



Figure 22. sensitive coastal landscape at Scotts Landing and the Lighthouse Restaurant in Warkworth.

In some parts of Rodney any new development is likely to have significant effects but development and quality rural environments are not mutually exclusive.

5.6 SPECIFIC INITIATIVES – RURAL RATES POLICY

5.6.1 Where we are now

The current Council sets rates as part of its Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) to recover its forecast net expenditure. Rates are currently levied on rural lifestyle properties (properties less than 4 hectares (9.9 acres)) that are different to rates on rural farm properties (properties of 4 hectares or greater). This approach seeks to recognise that the farming sector has a greater service requirement (particularly from the effect of heavy trucks on roads) than that of the rural lifestyle sector.

The Council is moving towards applying rates based on the capital value of properties. Rates are currently based on a mixture of the capital value of properties for the transport component of the rates, and land value with respect to other activities. There appears to be stronger relationships between the capital value of rural properties and the properties income than the relationship between land value and the properties income. The Council's rates policy is based on the idea that properties with limited capitalisation (such as vacant properties) are likely to make fewer demands on services and facilities provided by Council than those with relatively high capital values such as a dairy farm (which generates heavy truck movements), or a restaurant and vineyard complex (which can generate many vehicle movements).

Rates policy seeks to follow a contributor-beneficiary principle where practicable (where those who create demand for, or benefit most from a service or facility, pay a greater proportion of the costs associated with it), but in the end rates are a form of tax.

Existing Rural Rates Remissions

- Rate relief to ratepayers who protect land through a permanent voluntary legal covenant.
- Organisations benefiting the district such as sporting clubs, public halls and libraries and organisations whose principle objective is to promote education or health.
- Rates on multiple owned Maori freehold land granting relief for historic arrears if future rates are paid.
- Hardship resulting from a water leak upon proof of the leak, as evidenced by the repair invoice.

	Rural Lifestyle Rates	Rural Farm Rates
No. of Rated Properties	10,928	2,941
Average Rates 2010 (>0)	\$2,046	\$4,150
Largest Rates	\$75,836	\$31,617
Average Capital Values	\$899,799	\$1,564,188
Average Rates as a % of Average Capital Value	0.23	0.27
Average Land Values	\$601,610	\$1,281,842
Average Rates as a % of Average Land Value	0.34	0.32

Figure 23. Average Rural District Rates vs Property Values in Rodney District 2010, RDC Financial Services

- Land affected by natural calamity.
- Penalty remission on compassionate grounds
- Rate increases greater than 20% but not less than \$1,500.
- Uninhabited Islands which are not capable of habitation or economic use.
- Miscellaneous circumstances where it is inequitable or uneconomic to collect the rates.

5.6.2 Additional Rates Relief

Any deferment or reduction of Council rates that is not linked with reductions to spending on services, infrastructure or other costs is a form of subsidy. Some inequity between who benefits and who directly pays in the gathering and apportioning of taxes such as rates is inevitable and are a reflection of the goals, priorities and values of the organisation, its elected decision makers and therefore its residents.

The increases in the average land value of rural land illustrated in Figure 24 across a range of categories and its flow on effect on rates are a significant district issue. The increase in the value of occupied lifestyle properties per square meter of over 700% in the 13 year time frame of the data has corresponded with relatively insignificant movement in the value of forestry and pastoral land.

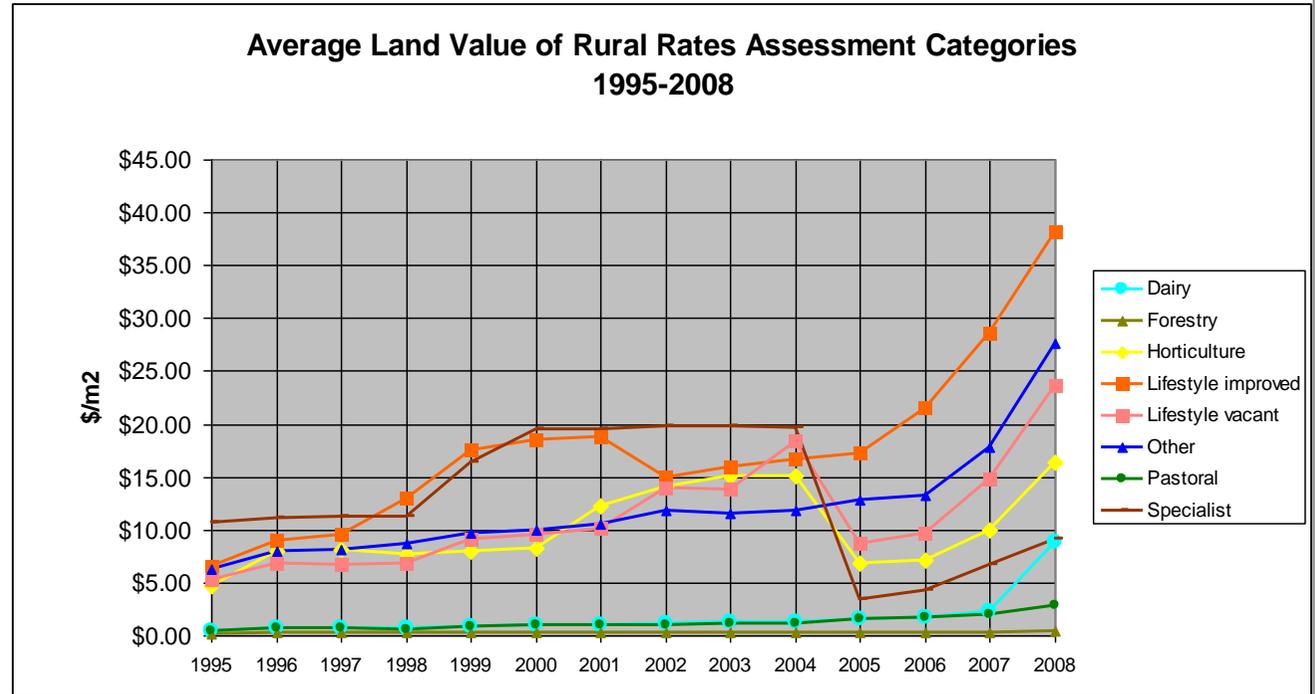


Figure 24. Change in Average Land Value of Rural Properties in Rodney 1995 - 2008, Property IQ 2009

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT

Rodney district continues to have a strong and viable rural economy.

Rates policy reflects the economic environmental social and cultural value, to local areas and the region of having a prosperous cared for accessible green buffer north of the City.

MOST NOTICABLE DIFFERENCES

See above.

HOW THIS COULD BE DONE

Farming Relief

Reduce a portion of rates on rural properties over a certain size that can demonstrate they are being actively farmed. A portion of such reductions could have to be repaid if the property were to be subdivided or developed for non-rural uses. A sunset clause could be attached to repayment obligations removing obligations that are more than 5-10 years old.

Where separate titles are held and farmed together they could be valued for rates purposes as a single property. A portion of any resulting rates reduction could be required to be repaid if the properties were converted to non-farming related uses.

Restrictive agreement

A landowner enters into an agreement restricting subdivision and development for a specified number of years qualifies for reduced rates for the period.

Environmental Remissions

Reduce a portion of rates on rural properties in water catchments with significant water quality and/or sedimentation issues in return for high value environmental benefits such as planting and fencing of the margins of streams and wetlands or connecting ecological corridors.

Recreation Remissions

Reduce a portion of rates on rural properties in return for high value social benefits such as allowing public access to connecting coastal walkways, to mountain bike trails, horse riding trails, to surf spots, water holes and other natural attractions.

Speculative Rate Calculations

Ensure that the rate setting process does not take speculative matters such as subdivision potential and nearby lifestyle properties into account.

WHY THIS APPROACH

- Long term wider public benefits from protecting rural jobs, open space, rural views and other benefits through preserving existing land uses via such subsidies, and the long term costs of not doing so, are evident and pressing enough to justify a greater portion of the costs of the services and works that Council's provide being paid for by the wider public of the region.
- If properly designed, such a system could help address increasing issues with ability to pay, escalating rural rates bills vs incomes and the burden of increasing public expectations and regulatory requirements affecting farming.
- Requirements for a portion of remissions to be repaid if the benefits that justify the remission are removed are necessary to reduce the likelihood of non-rural residents subsidising property speculation.
- Farmland is a rapidly diminishing finite natural resource.
- Agriculture is an important part of Rodney's economy closely linked to local and regional food processing and related industries, and to tourism through the natural and rural character that farms supply.
- In producing food close to the Auckland metro area, farming in Rodney helps to support local and regional sustainability and provides environmental benefits such as wildlife habitat, groundwater recharge and carbon sequestration.

5.7 SPECIFIC INITIATIVES - RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

5.7.1 Where we are now

Roading and Water Infrastructure

Rodney has 1,006 km of sealed roads and 704km of unsealed roads with no provision in the 2009-2019 Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) for further sealing of unsealed roads. It has predominantly open drains, 10 separate wastewater schemes and 6 water supply schemes making infrastructure planning very different to urban areas.

Engineering Standards

The need for the Council to provide for the safe and efficient movement of vehicles is the overriding driver of the Council's engineering standards applied to private access roads and intersections with Council or NZTA roads. Ongoing maintenance requirements and potential liability issues for the Council are also important drivers. Private access roads servicing groups of houses or properties with steep slopes are required to be concreted which can be visually striking and not at all rural in character. Metal roads which help retain rural character can also create maintenance and safety issues where development is significantly intensified. Grass swale road drains (which can be an important part of an area's "rural" appearance) can be unsustainable for rural residential development with large areas of impermeable surfaces and steep slopes can make unsustainable.

Private Infrastructure

Poor performing septic tank and wastewater irrigation systems has been identified as a significant source of pollution in some rural areas of Rodney⁶. Private, collectively owned and operated stormwater, wastewater and road access infrastructure options offer potentially sustainable, low impact solutions to a number of the challenges inherent with providing infrastructure for rural development. House buyers, developers and the Council are however cautious about proposals requiring small groups of households to manage costly repairs, maintenance, depreciation and replacement of indivisible assets in perpetuity through body-corporate entities. Because these arrangements need to bind potentially uncooperative future owners into significant financial obligations, they are potentially unstable.



Figure 25. New driveways with a maximum grade of more than 1:8 or accessing more than 4 dwellings are required to be constructed in concrete

Future Urban Zones and Structure Plan Implementation

The extent to which Future Urban zones and structure plans raise expectations about the ability to develop land, and raise land values and rates in advance of the Council's ability to plan, program and provide the infrastructure and complete the plan changes needed to rezone the land for development has been a significant issue in Rodney. Notwithstanding Council's efforts, there are a number of examples in the district where land has been identified in structure plans for development and examples where land has been zoned future urban, and it has not been feasible to provide the infrastructure needed to develop the area for too long.

Rural Broadband

Internet access in Rodney's rural area relies on dial-up access and is used predominantly for emails and accessing information.

⁶ Privately Owned Wastewater Systems Issues and Options Paper Prepared for Rodney District Council October 2008 Jenny Macdonald Consulting. N.B. this issue should not however be considered without also considering the relative impact of point and diffuse discharges from agricultural activities.

rural infrastructure continued

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT

Landuse planning is integrated with planning for transport, wastewater, stormwater, and water supply infrastructure.

Additional pressure for new road sealing in rural production areas is avoided by controlling the extent of new rural development and influencing the location of development.

New public and private infrastructure avoids impacts on natural areas and freshwater and marine ecology where ever possible and mitigates unavoidable impacts.

Rural broadband is available to the majority of rural communities within Rodney District.

The State Highway 1 between Puhoi and Wellsford has been improved to cater for existing and anticipated future regional growth and provide opportunities for economic and social development.

MOST NOTICABLE DIFFERENCES

As above.

HOW THIS COULD BE DONE

Integrated infrastructure, land use and environmental planning

Avoid re-zoning areas where infrastructure necessary for servicing such development appropriately is unlikely to be able to be provided in the short term or where providing such infrastructure would compromise the efficient staging of infrastructure spending.

Consider the impact on the country look and feel of the district and impacts on the natural environment in providing infrastructure and in applying, developing and revising engineering standards.

Plan and provide for fish and animal pathways and ways of avoiding the piping of streams when designing new developments and service infrastructure.

Actively promote the long term return on investment and future need for rural broadband.

Engage with Council infrastructure engineers early in the development of a proposal in order to explore possibilities for servicing developments in a way that is sympathetic to rural character while adequately addressing safety and maintenance issues.

Identify details of the likely servicing requirements for developments for consideration in the resource consent process to ensure the likely final built outcome of a proposal is considered by decision makers.

WHY THIS APPROACH

- On several occasions Environment Court decisions have voiced strong frustration at the time taken to facilitate development in areas identified for future development and have granted consents to unserviced urban developments that have delivered poor outcomes.
- Misalignment between the objectives of engineering standards, infrastructure providers and planning policy need to be minimised.
- Rural broadband will allow farmers to participate in online communities sharing information about farming practices and to make better use of internet based farming and business management tools. The improved connectivity will allow consistent improved supply chain management between producers, processing facilities and distribution points. It also has huge potential for diversifying the rural economy through activities with fewer impacts on natural and physical resources than traditional agricultural production.

5.8 SPECIFIC INITIATIVES – RESTORING AND PROTECTING BIODIVERSITY

5.8.1 Where we are now

The “variety of life” in the district has been described in various research as being in a state of rapid decline across all main types of ecosystems: forest, freshwater, shrublands, dunelands and estuarine. This decline is seen in clearance and fragmentation of natural areas, stock damage, and eutrophication (damaging amounts of nutrients from sewerage, agricultural runoff and fertilisers) and sediment accumulation in water bodies from erosion, decline of threatened species and widespread problem pests and weeds. Environments identified as acutely threatened include lowland rivers, lowland forests, lakes, wetlands and sand dune systems⁷. There are very few areas where the sequences of environments from the marine environment up to hill forest environments are intact; notable exceptions being the Atanui/Mt Auckland Forest to the Hoteo River-Tauhoa estuary; and the Wayby freshwater wetland – Dome-Conical forest.



Figure 26. Communities and landowners in Rodney have a good track record of participating in restoration planting schemes such as this Natural Heritage Fund planting day (Tapu Bush Road 2007).



⁷ Integrated Kaipara Harbour Management Group Gap Analysis 2010

restoring and protecting biodiversity continued

OUTCOMES BEING SOUGHT

Prevent further loss of biodiversity and degradation of the habitat areas that support them.

Shift the focus from damage limitation towards increasing the size, quality and connectedness of natural areas.

Achieving rehabilitation of degraded environments, recovery of targeted threatened species and increases in wildlife across the district.

Achieving the above through active community, volunteer and agency involvement in environmental restoration and protection.

MOST NOTICABLE DIFFERENCES

As above

HOW THIS COULD BE DONE

Stronger emphasis on incentives

Although regulations and policies are important “backstops”, greater availability of targeted funds for restoration planting and other protection works are likely to achieve better results than relying on regulations.

Systematic conservation and restoration strategies

Employ a range of targeted strategies or initiatives including environmental education, species protection, habitat protection, stream planting, planting buffers and corridors, fencing of sensitive areas, intensive and sustained pest and weed control and other strategies that are coordinated with consenting functions.

Partnerships

Partnerships between the individual communities of landowners, residents and agencies, school groups and volunteer groups associated with the various sub-catchments around environmental projects.

Restoration planning partnerships with Maori featuring active participation in planning protection and restoration projects; integration of Treaty of Waitangi settlement principles; and integration of Maori experience, knowledge and practices.

Ensuring persistence of wild life

Understand tolerable levels of pollution, sustainable habitat sizes, need for linkages to allow migration, ability to adapt to rapid climate change and other “bottom lines” that will allow native wildlife to persist.

Improving land use practices

An example of this could be formulating and agreeing annual tonnage targets for contaminants in rivers for sub-catchment communities to assess community initiatives and collective progress on improving land use practices against.

Lifting the bar

Reduce permitted standards for earthworks volumes, bush removal and modifying water bodies to levels consistent with the reasonable requirements of farming and rural production activities. Apply effective deterrents to encourage compliance.

Further Studies

Further research is required as part of any District Plan process to update existing ecological research. This research should then be used to define areas that are currently of ecological significance or have the potential to be ecologically significant.

WHY THIS APPROACH

- Financial incentives as well as environmental standards are both important in getting the right balance in seeking to improve land use practices. Allowing the use and enjoyment of land with a minimum of interference is an important principle for the Council however there is no such thing as a “right to pollute” or to destroy the environment.
- The joining up of the functions of local and regional authorities in the Auckland Council presents a huge opportunity for more coordinated thinking and joint decision making, funding and actions.
- Effective and lasting environmental solutions need initiative and ownership by communities as well as active and sustained support and encouragement from agencies.
- Evidence suggests biodiversity will continue to decline across all ecosystems in the district without active and systematic conservation planning, restoration and management.

5.9 SPECIFIC INITIATIVES - MAORI OWNED LAND

5.9.1 Where We Are Now

Tangata Whenua in Rodney District

Iwi are an important stakeholder in the District.

Matters of Significance To Tangata Whenua

- Ancestral taonga.
- Waahi tapu.
- Ability to exercise Kaitiakitanga.
- Effects of Development, e.g. on waterways.
- Cultural heritage values e.g. water quality
- Development Aspirations.
- Ability to return to and reside on Maori land.
- Ability to use and develop Maori land in order to provide for their economic, social and cultural wellbeing.
- Relationships with natural and physical resources.
- Provision of access for Maori to areas for cultural purposes and restricted public access where necessary.

Current Approach

District Plan

The current District Plan rules make some provision for housing on Maori Land subject to resource consent. The District Plan also seeks to recognise principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, and the issue of alienation of Maori from the exercise of Kaitiakitanga and Waahi tapu. It also identifies the impact of coastal subdivision and development speculation on increases in land values and rural rates.

5.9.2 Specific Initiatives

Starting Point

The Rural Strategy should recognise Maori knowledge of sustainability and environmental management and acknowledge their role as Kaitiakitanga, recognise Maori aspirations for development of their land as a significant landowner and address how land in and around Marae can be dealt with. Maori have also suggested that more housing for whanau could be provided adjacent to their Marae and on other areas of Maori land. A focus on improving the environment e.g. requiring infrastructure prior to development and active management and enhancement of riparian margins.

The Strategy should also recognise the cultural values and relationships of tangata whenua with natural and physical resources.

Further Consultation

The details of this approach are to be worked through in greater detail as the Rural Strategy is further developed.

6 WHERE TO FROM HERE?

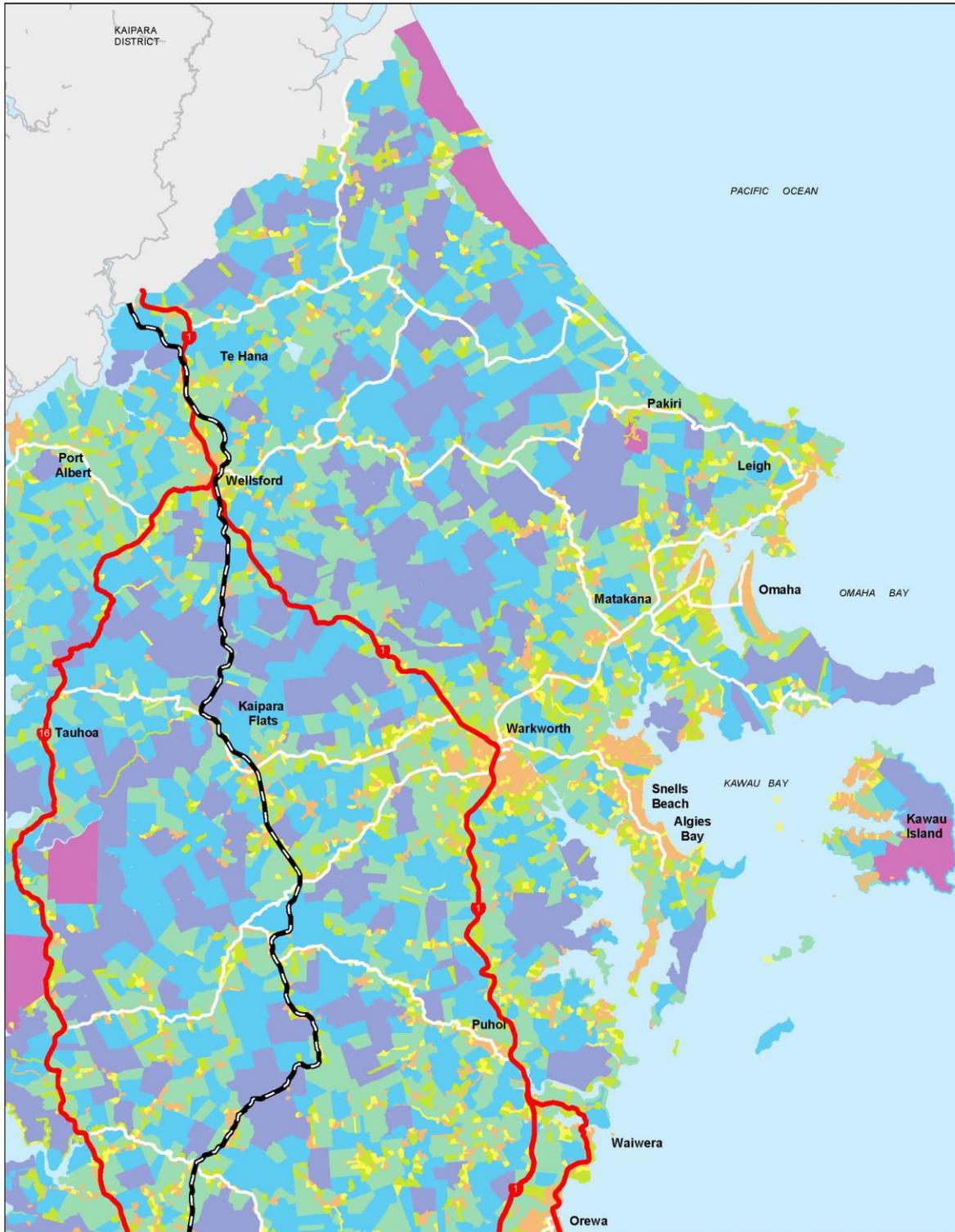
Decision Making

Decisions will be made on the content of the Rural Strategy following consultation and a hearing. It is intended that the amended Rural Strategy will then be adopted by Rodney District Council. The strategy will then become a key document to feed into the Spatial Strategy currently being compiled for the Greater Auckland Area.

The rural areas of Rodney District include fast growing rural communities, an important rural economy with huge potential for tourism and recreation, alongside large farming areas, high quality rural landscapes and sensitive natural environments, as well as important open space areas. The Rural Strategy will inform the management of the contrasting interests associated with these features within the new Council and influence how the Council sees the future of its rural areas.

7 APPENDIX – SUPPORTING MAPS

The following maps show the lot sizes throughout the District.



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Title Size (hectares)
0 to 2
2 to 4
4 to 10
10 to 40
40 to 100
100 to 600
600 to 15,000

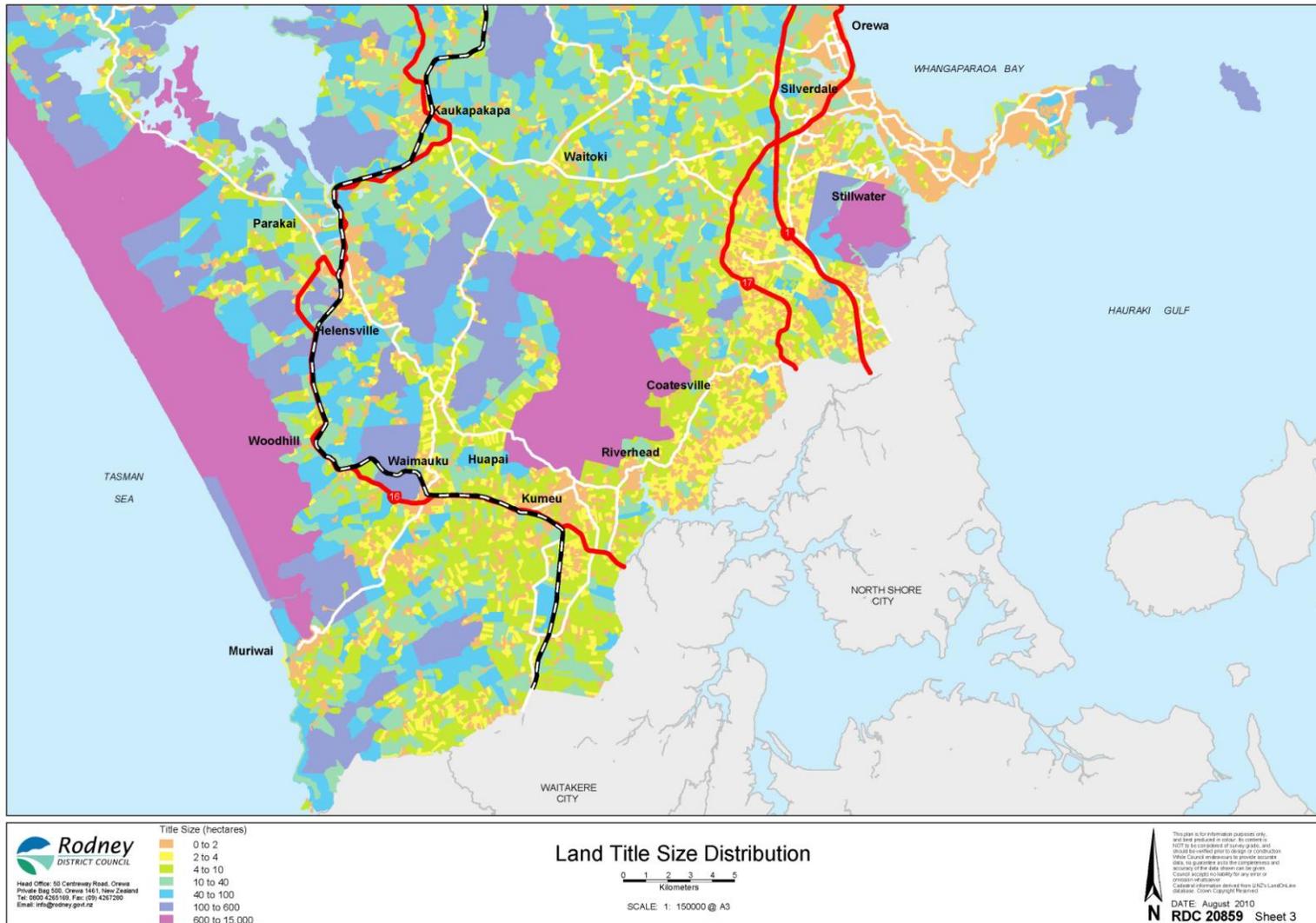
Land Title Size Distribution

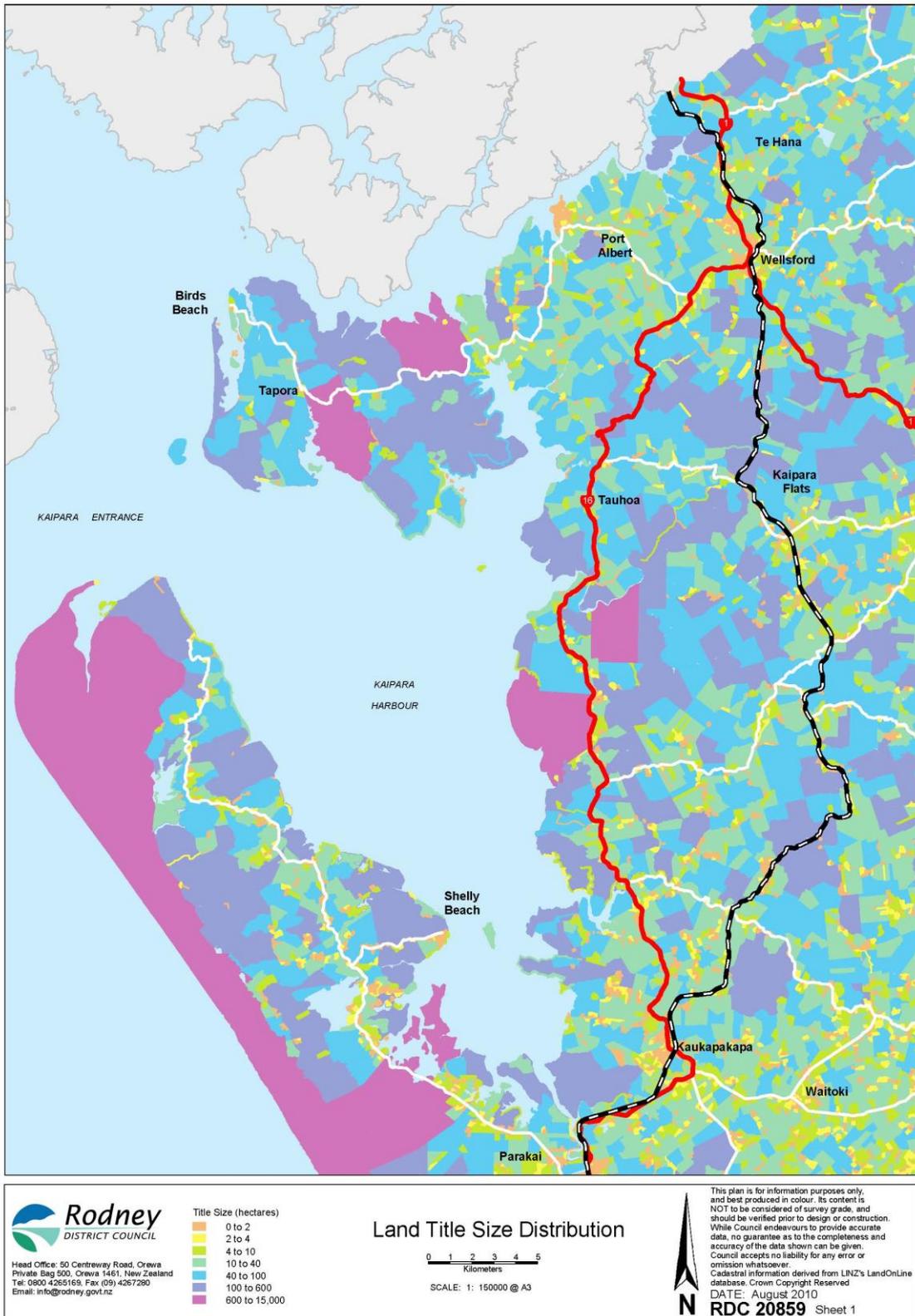


SCALE: 1: 150000 @ A3



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RDC 20859 Sheet 2





RDC making a positive difference

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