

UNITARY PLAN ISSUES PAPER – RURAL AREAS

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Introduction

This paper is one of six main issue papers providing guidance for the development of Auckland's Unitary Plan. An issue in the context of this paper is a problem. Problems must be well defined to enable objectives, policies and methods to be able to address the problem. A problem that is defined and measurable in its extent through indicator monitoring is sought where possible. All problems must be within scope of the purpose and functions of the Act. Issues are prioritised within this paper as Council does not have endless capacity to address all issues facing Auckland. Emphasis must be given to those issues that are causing the greatest impediment to Council meeting its statutory obligations and achieving its strategic outcomes as defined within the Auckland Plan.

Either broad approaches or options are identified to enable the relevant issues to be addressed. This paper identifies broad approaches where further investigations are needed to be undertaken in order to clearly identify options in a section 32 sense. Options are clarified to the point of being able to be evaluated and recommendations made on preferred options to then set up drafting of objectives, policies and methods.

As a result of Auckland local government reorganisation, we now have an opportunity to bring consistency to:

- District level issues;
- Methodology used for assessing the significance of and priority given to each issue;
- Unitary plan (including both District and Regional level) response to each issue.

This paper sets out the:

- Principal issues facing rural parts of the Auckland Council area, and how existing plans address them;
- A possible methodology for the Unitary Plan, and
- Some possible courses of action to address the issues.

Statutory Requirements

The following statutes and regulations apply to rural areas:

Acts of Parliament:

Resource Management Act 1991
Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act
Waste Minimisation Act

National Environmental Standards for:

Air Quality
Sources of Human Drinking Water
Telecommunication Facilities
Electricity Transmission

National Policy Statements on:

Electricity Transmission
Renewable Electricity Generation
Freshwater Management
New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010
Biodiversity (Proposed)

The New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme

More detail on how the above legislation influences the way Council manages rural areas is contained in **Appendix A** of this report.

Current issues noted in existing Auckland plans

Auckland city and district plans cover all rural issues noted in this paper, although not all plans include all issues. The following recent work is or will be of considerable benefit in the preparation of the unitary plan issues:

- Auckland Spatial Plan
- Rodney District Council: published an assessment of rural issues¹ which was adopted just prior to local government reorganisation
- Franklin District Council: Rural Plan Change 14: 2002 onwards; recent and current appeals to the Environment Court just prior to local government reorganisation
- Papakura District Council: Rural Plan Change 13: 2007 onwards; recent and current appeals to the Environment Court just prior to local government reorganisation
- Manukau City Council: recent Environment Court determination re. private plan change, Wairoa canal housing

Objectives and policies

Most legacy plans' objectives and policies are remarkably similar. In other words, Councils have been trying to achieve much the same things.

The Unitary Plan team will carry out further research into the operative and nearly – operative objectives and policies for rural areas. This will enable a consolidated and consistent set of rural objectives and policies to be prepared.

Methods

Most legacy plans approach planning in rural areas by dividing them into zones, each promoting a particular outcome. These include (but are not limited to):

- General rural zones which favour farming, forestry, quarries, horticulture, rural industry, and a range of non-rural uses. Restricted opportunities to subdivide land
- Rural residential or countryside living zones, allowing subdivision to smaller lots than other rural zones, to provide areas for countryside living

¹ Rodney District Council Rural Strategy. Adopted September 2010.

- Zones for areas of indigenous vegetation or land with high landscape values, where clearance of indigenous vegetation is discouraged and earthworks are very limited in scale
- Zones that provide for urban growth or future urban development. These areas are either already within the MUL or are expected to be included within it. Typically, rezoning is required before land can be subdivided, developed, or used for urban uses
- Zones for specific uses such as large industries (e.g. Waiuku steel mill), , aerodromes, airports, airfields, and quarries
- Zones for environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands, forests, or high natural beauty. Buildings are generally subject to resource consent to assess visual impacts, earthworks volumes are limited, and vegetation clearance is restricted
- Zones for rural settlements, villages, and towns set in rural areas
- Restrictions on advertising hoardings
- Designations for public works (e.g. cemeteries, motorways, railways, sewerage schemes)

Within rural zones, typical rules include (but are not limited to):

- Simple numeric bulk and location rules for buildings in most zones except the most environmentally sensitive zones
- Provision for a wide range of rural and non-rural uses by way of resource consent
- Restrictions on subdivision and earthworks, in order to prevent excessive fragmentation of land title ownership
- Incentives to set aside areas of indigenous vegetation, natural features, and carry out enhancement planting, and restrictions on clearance of indigenous vegetation
- Incentives to transfer rural titles from one place to another, in order to reduce the latent potential of lots in rural areas
- Assessment of the impact on water quality of any earthworks
- Rules to prevent the spread of urban Auckland, including the regional MUL
- Restrictions on discharges of contaminants to air, water, or ground

The rural plan change for Franklin District Plan is the most sophisticated, using a three tier system of management areas, zones and policy areas or overlays. This approach is promoted in the Rodney District Council Rural Strategy adopted September 2010 (which has not been given effect to in the district plan), and will be recommended as the most effective approach for the new Unitary Plan. Other plans use a two tier system of zones and policy areas or overlays.

Summary of Similarities and Differences

The Operative Rodney Plan² has the most prescriptive policies for addressing issues in the rural environment. The Franklin Plan has the most connected flow from issues through to objectives, policies and rules.

Because the existing district plans' methods are different, the Unitary Plan Team will develop a methodology for giving effect consistently to objectives and policies across Auckland.

The Unitary Plan will incorporate those elements of current methodologies and approaches that are proving the most effective, including management areas.

Unique methods from some of the District Plans

The three tier approach in Franklin uses management areas to differentiate between different parts of the District, irrespective of the zones used within each management area. It uses three spatial tiers comprising management areas, zones, and policy areas or overlays.

Overlaps with other work streams

Rural area planning has considerable overlap with work relating to:

- Land (sediment control, vegetation removal, earthworks including quarrying, roading, tracking, trenching, land interface with freshwater)
- Water (quality, quantity, allocation, freshwater and land management integration, outstanding freshwater resources, iwi values, NZ Policy Statement, restoration of lowland ecosystems, livestock and waterways, riparian zone management, stream management)
- Biodiversity (restoration, enhancement, riparian protection)
- Housing (in villages, visually significant locations)
- Retailing and commerce (in villages, rural based and non-rural based retailing and commerce)
- Industry (rural industries, non-rural industries)
- Design (built character, sustainable design)
- Infrastructure (vehicle access, parking and loading, transport and land use integration, location and scale of urban growth and development, traffic generation, reverse sensitivity, providing/promoting/managing modes of transport, rural transport issues, network classification and management)
- Designations (rolling over of existing designations, new designations, policy approach)
- Energy (network utilities, renewable electricity generation, greenhouse gas)

² Note this does not incorporate the approach set out in the Rodney District Council Rural Strategy.

- Climate change (determining effects, response)
- Network utilities (recognising protecting regionally and nationally significant infrastructure, region-wide rules, future demand, new technology)
- Heritage – built, cultural, landscape, trees (identification and mapping, thematic review, consultation strategy)
- Treaty of Waitangi (Maori land, Treaty settlement land, Crown land, application of principles, iwi management plans, traditional land use, involvement in plan preparation, mapping sites of significance, consultation)
- Open space (categories, ‘greenbelt’, co-governance)
- Recreation (access to land for recreation, use of rural land for recreational pursuits, halls, community centres)
- Social policy, community development.

Best practice from other councils

A review of provisions in and processes used in New Zealand and overseas plans will assist in providing examples of good practice. The MfE – hosted Quality Planning internet site contains some best practice examples.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

What are rural issues?

An issue is an existing or potential problem requiring resolution, or a particular resource to be protected or enhanced, in order to promote the purpose of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA).³

A rural issue is an issue that relates principally to the distinctive characteristics of rural areas. In the Auckland Council area, rural issues relate to:

- Existing rural resources, their accessibility and use;
- Which rural resources should be protected from change, which restored, and which enhanced;
- Which rural resources can be modified without detracting from rural amenity values, the natural environment, or creating other adverse effects;

³ The purpose of the RMA is set out in section 5: *to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. Sustainable management means managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural wellbeing and for their health and safety while –*
(a) sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and
(b) safeguarding the life – supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems, ; and
(c) avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.

- What are the key contributing factors that relate to how land is used, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of each;
- Who has interests in rural areas,
- What problems or conflicts are evident in rural areas, can these be resolved, and if not, what if anything should we do in response?

Each issue needs to be considered against a background of opportunities and constraints associated with rural resources. These vary from place to place. The key resources that relate to rural issues are:

Water	Coast
Community	Natural character
Economy	Ecology
Infrastructure	Landscape and amenity
Transport	Soils
	Minerals (including aggregates)

All Auckland rural areas face similar issues. Some effects-based plans are vague about what the specific rural issues are, for example Hauraki Gulf Islands and the Waitakere Plans. This approach can limit consideration of rural areas, particularly in relation to issues such as the importance of protecting high quality soils, fragmentation of land titles, and latent potential of existing lots⁴.

A more detailed comparison of how Auckland plans deal with rural issues, objectives and policies is contained in Attachment 1.

Several issues relating to rural areas are relevant to zones within the Metropolitan Urban Limit (MUL), including:

- Providing for and enhancing biodiversity
- Using building design and location criteria as a way of protecting character and amenity
- Landscape protection
- Natural environment protection
- Heritage protection

Significant rural issues facing Auckland

The key rural and coastal issues facing Auckland are:

- Managing growth in rural and coastal areas

⁴ 'Latent potential' means the number of vacant lots in rural areas that meet the minimum standards for building a house.

- Living in Rural and Coastal Areas
- Sustainability of Natural Resources
- Biodiversity and the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Features
- Sustainable Management of the Coastal Environment

Coastal areas are discussed under a separate paper.

The key rural issues are comprised of the following issue topics:

1. Water quality and quantity
2. Sustainability of natural resources
3. Character and amenity values
4. Growth management
5. Reverse sensitivity
6. Diversification of land uses
7. Protection of heritage values
8. Living in rural and coastal areas
9. Recreational use of rural areas
10. Economic sustainability of rural areas
11. Regionally significant infrastructure

They are discussed below.

Significant Issue 1: Water quality and quantity

Land and water management practices can cause streams, rivers, lakes, and groundwater to:

1. Become degraded by contaminants such as:
 - Sediment
 - Chemicals, and
 - Refuse
 - Effluent

and:

- Silt up with sediment which eventually fills streambeds, lakes, and the harbours or estuaries into which they flow
- Die, losing their ability to support flora and fauna
- Lose their ability to function as floodways
- Become unsightly, degrading the amenity values of adjacent areas.
- Contaminants from rural areas can find their way into natural water,
- Be unsafe to drink, or to swim in

2. Become over-allocated⁵, leading to loss of supply from wells, streams and rivers, and streams shrinking and drying-up.

Explanation

Water quality is the most important issue for rural parts of Auckland. Without clean water in streams, rivers, lakes, and groundwater, all aspects of rural life suffer. All current plans address this issue, directly and obliquely.

The National Policy Statement (NPS) on Freshwater Management⁶ sets out objectives and policies for the management of freshwater, and requires Regional Councils to amend their policy statements and plans to give effect to them in accordance with a prescribed programme and timetable.

Recommended approach for the unitary plan

- Incorporate the objectives of the National Policy Statement – Freshwater Management 2010
- Provide a basis for assessing the values of freshwater and set out a framework for the current and future management of freshwater quality in the region. Promote an integrated catchment management approach for improved land and water management
- Continue with current plan provisions that protect existing high water quality areas, maintain other areas, and provide attractive incentives for people to improve degraded areas
- Manage demand for and allocation of freshwater resources
- Encourage water sensitive design (of plant and equipment that consume water) to assist demand management
- Explore regulatory and non-regulatory possibilities for riparian protection

Significant Issue 2: Sustainability of natural resources

Unless Council intervenes, natural resources are unlikely to be used or maintained sustainably.

Explanation

⁵ Over-allocation arises when a regional Council authorises more water to be taken from a natural source than the ability of that source to supply water.

⁶ The National Policy Statement- Freshwater Management 2010 was issued by notice in the Gazette on 12 May 2011, and came into effect 1 July 2011.

Natural resource use is fundamental to rural activities. Sustainable natural resource use relates (but is not limited) to the following:

- a. Maintaining rural land principally for rural use.
- b. Safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of soils, especially high quality/versatile soils, by preventing their loss through fragmentation of titles, being covered by buildings (other than glasshouses), erosion, overproduction, contamination, and other similar circumstances.
- c. Preventing water quality from becoming degraded through land drainage, pollution, or sedimentation. Encouraging the maintenance and enhancement of riparian habitat.
- d. Maintaining access to aggregates and mineral resources (especially quarries), and ensuring that aggregate extraction is not hindered or halted by third-party opposition (reverse sensitivity).
- e. Maintaining the potential for hydro power and wind power for development when it is needed.
- f. Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, and protecting and enhancing natural features including:
 - i. Maintaining existing indigenous vegetation, flora and fauna.
 - ii. Providing opportunities for (and rewarding those who carry out) enhancement of indigenous vegetation, flora and fauna.
- g. Ensuring water supply catchments remain protected from pollution or the adverse effects of land clearance.
- h. Preventing soil erosion.

There are extensive resources of mineral deposits. Mineral potential has been identified and mapped, and the locations and quantities of these resources suggest that there are opportunities for the long-term extraction of the main industrial minerals. This is necessary to meet the demands of the Region and the future growth of Auckland.

Existing district plans have quarry and special zones for mineral extraction and processing. Management tools in the unitary plan will need to take into account the need to protect many of these resources and to provide buffers to preserve amenity and deal with potential land-use conflicts.

Recommended approach for the unitary plan

The prosperity of rural areas depends on continuing access to and use of natural resources. However, in order to ensure that the use of natural resources is carried out sustainably, it is useful to set some parameters to that use. The strategy will ensure that:

- Appropriate access to the natural resources is maintained, and
- The adverse effects of resource use are managed appropriately,

by:

- Using management areas, zones and overlays to identify appropriate areas for general agricultural, horticultural and forestry production, mixed rural uses, rural residential uses, and mineral extraction.
- Enabling the use of rural land for primary production subject to simple, straightforward planning standards, unless that land is otherwise constrained by being in an area where additional limitations can be justified.
- Limiting the subdivision of rural land for countryside living other than in identified areas.
- Providing incentives for transferrable rural lot rights, to reduce the latent (residential) potential of rural land.
- Providing opportunities for small scale low intensity non-agricultural rural businesses.
- Carrying forward the existing mineral extraction zones within management areas, providing opportunities for resource consents with threshold limits for extraction and processing, and to recognising the value of small farm quarries producing material for use on-site.
- Discourage land management practices that adversely affect soil versatility and productivity

Adopting these rural strategies will achieve the following outcomes:

- That land remains available for sustainable primary production and sustainable rural-related activities
- That the rural landscape and rural character of productive areas remain typical of a working rural environment
- That ecosystems, biodiversity, and wildlife corridors are strengthened or enhanced
- That allotments used principally for residential use (i.e. countryside living) are located close to urban areas or rural towns and villages, and not on highly productive land

These strategies will need to be supported by strategies that will result in:

- The spread of urban Auckland being contained
- The provision of adequate infrastructure to support rural areas

- Rural resources remaining accessible for reasonable use
- Areas of high natural character, and outstanding natural landscapes and features, being protected
- Historic heritage being protected or conserved
- Indigenous biodiversity being protected and enhanced
- Improved water quality and availability, and soil conservation
- Activities in flood prone areas or areas subject to natural hazards adapting to the hazard
- The opportunity for rural activities to have a reasonable discharge of contaminants to air
- Reasonable access to minerals being safeguarded, and the adverse effects of mineral extraction being adequately managed

Significant Issue 3: Character and amenity values

Unless Council regulates the use and modification of rural land, its rural values, character, and landscapes are likely to be degraded.

Explanation

Many factors combine to contribute to “Rural character”:

There are a range of attributes which contribute to the character of the locality, and these can vary across the District. Attributes that can contribute to rural character include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The dominance in the landscape of natural vegetation, ecological networks, dynamic primary production regimes including pasture, crops and forestry;
- The absence or subservience of manmade structures other than those related to rural production activities;
- A high ratio of open space relative to the built environment;
- Significant areas of land in pasture, crops, forestry and/or indigenous vegetation;
- Noises, smells, dust and effects associated with the use of rural land for a wide range of agricultural, horticultural, forestry and mineral extraction and processing purposes;

- Low population densities relative to urban areas.

While the rural landscape is constantly evolving and changing, if the key characteristics above are maintained, then rural areas will retain their “rural character”.

Rural landscapes can be visually altered by structures and buildings such as greenhouses and pack-houses. However these are recognised as important components of primary production activities, form part of the rural environment and are generally considered rural in appearance and value.

Landscape issues relate to people’s values and perceptions and are very subjective. However, there are certain landscape principles that can be applied which form a basis for managing development and land uses. The region’s landscape has been assessed and mapped. The landscape units and landscape values that have been identified show the capacity to accommodate change.

Recommended approach for the unitary plan

The character and amenity values of rural areas can be maintained and enhanced through:

- Identifying:
 - specific locations suitable for development or growth
 - landscape values which should be recognised and protected
- Identifying and protecting:
 - Stands of trees including indigenous vegetation
 - Individual or specimen trees
 - Significant natural areas
- Establishment of coastal management areas
- Identification of areas of landscape sensitive to modification
 - high development potential
 - moderate development potential
 - limited development potential
 - no development potential
- Developing landscape design guidelines for subdivision related to reconfiguration of lots, protection or enhancement of natural features and ecosystems, and rural activities in landscape units that are sensitive to change

- Unitary Plan zoning techniques that use management areas, zones, and policy areas or overlays to guide change in rural areas so that change occurs in those parts of the landscape most able to accommodate it.

Significant Issue 4: Managing residential growth

Unless Council intervenes to direct residential growth into locations where it can sustainably be accommodated, its adverse effects will:

- undermine important components of Council's rural strategy
- create adverse effects that will prove difficult to remedy or mitigate

Explanation

The ability to provide capacity to meet the demands of population growth should be considered in the context of the existing settlement pattern within the District and the proximity and influence of the Auckland metropolitan area that creates much of the demand.

Some fully serviced towns and villages can accommodate further growth.

Many other towns and villages have limited ability to absorb further growth without substantial investment in infrastructure including water supply, wastewater disposal, stormwater collection and disposal, and roading.

Some villages can absorb growth through providing self-sufficient, larger lots, on their periphery. These will need to be comprehensively planned and at an appropriate scale.

This demand for countryside living creates a unique tension between those relying on the productive capability of the land and those who, for a variety of reasons, elect to reside in the rural areas. Often the rural amenity and environment that is attributable to primary production, is also valued by those who wish to live outside an urban environment. The demand for such rural living can in turn undermine the viability of primary production activities and erode the amenity and environmental qualities that make the rural area an attractive place in which to live.

Pursuit of this rural lifestyle for its own sake (rather than in association with rural production) leads to fragmentation of rural titles (rural sprawl). This can also lead to demands by landowners for road upgrading, and urban-standard services such as water supply and wastewater reticulation.

It also leads to larger numbers of people becoming reliant solely on private transport to and from their urban workplaces (compared with rural use of the land). This will place more demands on the road network.

The central issue is ensuring that sustainable opportunities are provided to accommodate the region's continuing growth, while managing its natural and physical environment. This includes the need to provide for the wide range of established activities that rely on the

resources of the region, encouraging the maintenance and enhancement of its rural and coastal character, and natural environmental values.

Recommended approach for the unitary plan

Provide a framework for assessing how best to accommodate growth in settlements.

Zoning settlements to:

- Classify settlements in a hierarchy of about five types, ranging from those that are fully serviced and capacity to grow, to those that are small, remote, and have little if any ability to grow.
- Direct public investment in infrastructure into those settlements where growth can be accommodated and where there will be sufficient public benefit to justify it
- Direct private investment in infrastructure into those settlements where growth can be accommodated but where public benefit does not justify public investment in infrastructure
- Require Structure Plans for growth areas

Significant Issue 5: Reverse sensitivity

The District's economic and community wellbeing is heavily dependent on a viable and diverse rural economy. The introduction of more opportunities for rural lifestyle living and the quality of life expectations of these new residents will inevitably lead to increased conflict with other land uses. Conflicts can also arise between farming activities and other different productive activities. If these conflicts are not managed, the viability and diversity of the rural economy will be unnecessarily reduced.

Explanation

The District Plan needs to address the matter of reverse sensitivity, while providing for some recognition of the needs of residents. The plan needs to recognise and protect existing rural activities and their typical characteristics to ensure reverse sensitivity issues are avoided, remedied or mitigated.

Examples of situations that can give rise to reverse sensitivity problems include:

- Odour associated with normal farming activities, such as from dairy sheds, silage pits, onions drying, and intensive farming operations;
- The use of chemical sprays, spraydrift;
- Normal rural noise: dogs, cows, hens, farm machinery, bird scaring devices, hay making and other farming related activities;
- Dust, noise and traffic from mineral extraction activities;

which have an impact on those who live in rural areas for the perceived “peace and quiet”.

Adverse effects can also include incompatibility between different productive activities, such as:

- Agricultural sprays affecting greenhouse or organic farming operations;
- Odour causing a nuisance to neighbours;
- Sprays and fertilisers affecting stock and people.

Primary production should be able to be carried out in the rural zone without constraints being imposed on it by other, more sensitive activities. Because primary production activities generate effects which may affect the wellbeing of those living nearby, the interface between the two needs to be carefully managed. The potential for normal primary production activities to be constrained can increase when the number of people not involved in primary production also increases.

Recommended approach for the unitary plan

The unitary plan is an appropriate mechanism:

- (a) To manage the adverse effects of rural uses, and safeguard their ability to continue operating satisfactorily, including:
 - Farming
 - Forestry
 - Horticulture
 - Other primary production uses
- (b) To protect existing land uses and resources that cannot realistically be located elsewhere or in urban areas, including:
 - Quarries, aggregate sources
 - Aerodromes, airports
 - Rural industries
 - Large non-rural industries in rural areas (for example, the Glenbrook mill)

Significant Issue 6: Diversification of land uses

Rural areas are attractive to a wide range of non-rural uses, and if Council does not intervene to limit their spread in rural areas, productive rural potential will be lost and amenity values will be degraded.

Explanation

A wide range of activities unrelated to primary production occur in rural areas.

The unitary plan needs to provide flexibility for a broad range of land uses and opportunities in order to allow rural areas and settlements to be productive in different and innovative ways.

However, this must be balanced against the need to maintain the productive potential of rural land, to maintain rural landscapes, natural character values, open space, and indigenous biodiversity.

Therefore, it is appropriate to provide in rural areas for a range of activities that:

- “fit” comfortably within their particular local rural context,
- complement rural production activities, and
- promote land and water management objectives

Recommended approach for the unitary plan

Visitor accommodation:

Limit the location and scale to:

- Homestay, in houses anywhere in the rural area (including in settlements)
- Other than homestay, principally to locations within settlements that have infrastructure that can support them
- Destinations outside settlements where it can be demonstrated that there will be significant environmental benefits

Rural-related activities:

Limit the location and scale to locations:

- Where infrastructure is able adequately to support it, and
- It will not detract from rural amenity or landscape values.

Non-rural activities:

Limit the location and scale areas to locations where:

- Infrastructure is able adequately to support them
- They will not detract from rural amenity or landscape values, and
- Significant environmental benefits will accrue from granting rather than refusing consent.

Significant Issue 7: Protection of heritage values

Heritage is an important aspect of community wellbeing. Unless some regulatory protection is provided, loss of heritage is likely to result, and leading to a loss of amenity values to the detriment of the rural community.

Explanation

Preservation of heritage involves protecting:

- Buildings, sites, and areas of historic heritage value
- Places of significance to Tangata Whenua:
 - Sites of significance
 - Land settlement land/Treaty of Waitangi claim land
 - Archaeological remains
- Biodiversity, landscapes, significant trees
- Other places that the community values.

This is discussed in another issue paper.

Recommended approach for the unitary plan

Include provisions that provide regulatory protection to heritage buildings, sites, trees, and archaeological remains that are shown in a heritage register.

Require resource consent for all significant modifications of these things.

Allow demolition, felling, removal, or other modification of an item on the heritage register only in circumstances where:

- It is absolutely unavoidable
- Significant environmental benefits will accrue from granting rather than refusing consent.

Significant Issue 8: Recreational use of rural areas

If Council does not acquire land for recreational purposes, the opportunity for suitable land to be available to the public for recreational purposes will be lost.

Some recreational uses are best located in rural areas. The unitary plan should provide for them to ensure they are established in appropriate locations, and their adverse effects are adequately managed.

Explanation

People in Auckland value the amenity and recreational values offered by recreational destinations including:

- Recreational destinations such as regional parks, conservation estates, private forest park locations, islands
- Tourist and visitor recreational facilities in rural areas
- Coastlines and coastal holiday settlements

However, with these can come:

- Heavy use of inadequate roading, services, and other infrastructure
- Adverse effects from recreational vehicles

There is potential for more recreational use of rural areas, including visitor accommodation in appropriate locations

Recommended approach for the unitary plan

- Designate sites that should be acquired for reserves
- Provide incentives for land to be set aside as reserve or equivalent public access
- Provide (through zoning or by resource consent) for recreational activities that require a rural location or that are associated with the rural resource, with appropriate management of their adverse effects
- Require public access to and along the coast to be provided in appropriate locations

Significant Issue 9: Economic sustainability of rural areas

Unless the natural resources found in rural areas are sustainably managed, the economic sustainability of rural areas cannot be assured.

Explanation

The land, soil and water resources of the District are finite resources upon which much of the economic wellbeing of the people of the region relies. The versatility and availability of these resources is fundamental to the prosperity of Auckland rural areas.

The management of these resources must therefore be focussed on ensuring that they remain in a suitable state and form for present and future generations. This can be achieved by ensuring that the effects of activities do not:

- Adversely affect the life supporting capacity of natural and physical resources, or
- Result in the versatility and availability of these resources being lost or compromised.

Activities that can adversely affect the District's rural resources can be grouped as follows:

- Those that are not reliant on rural resources for their location, and
- Those that rely directly on particular rural resources, but have a significant potential to damage those resources, and therefore may not be sustainable in terms of their cumulative effects on land, soil and water resources.

Non-rural uses located appropriately in rural areas can make a significant contribution to the rural economy, however, provided their adverse effects can be avoided remedied or mitigated through conditions of resource consent or operating standards. Where they cannot, they should not be located in rural areas.

For example, ad-hoc residential development (in the form of countryside living) with a high level of fragmentation can prevent or severely limit activities that rely on the natural resources from continuing or establishing.

Recommended approach for the unitary plan

Ensure the plan requires that activities that do not rely directly on particular rural resources, such as countryside living, are not are provided for in rural areas unless:

- Significant environmental benefits will accrue from granting rather than refusing consent, and
- The versatility and availability of land, soil and water resources will not be lost or compromised.

Provide for activities that contribute to the economic sustainability of rural Auckland, by ensuring that resource consents are required only where necessary to evaluate the effects of the activities on the versatility and availability of the natural resources found in rural areas.

See also:

Significant Issue 2: Sustainability of natural resources

Significant Issue 4: Managing residential growth

Significant Issue 5: Reverse sensitivity

Significant Issue 6: Diversification of land uses

Significant Issue 10: Regionally significant infrastructure

Some regionally significant infrastructure needs to be located in rural areas. Unless the unitary plan makes appropriate provision for it, urban, rural, and coastal areas within and outside Auckland will not be adequately serviced.

Explanation

Motorways such as State highway 1, the national electricity transmission grid, and the main gas transmission pipeline are examples of regionally and nationally important infrastructure that are located in rural areas. The unitary plan needs to make appropriate provision for them. Regionally significant infrastructure thus includes:

- Transport infrastructure:
 - Roads
 - Rail
 - Airports, aerodromes and their flight paths
- Urban support infrastructure:
 - Power transmission lines, switching stations
 - Gas pipelines
 - Water supply dams, pipelines
 - Wastewater treatment and disposal
 - Refuse collection and disposal
- Rural support infrastructure:
 - Halls and community centres
 - Villages, rural settlements, and retail services within them
 - Refuse collection and disposal facilities

Another issue paper discusses how the unitary plan should provide for infrastructure.

SUMMARY OF BROAD APPROACH

Resource management regime

The resource management regime for rural areas needs to achieve the following:

- Enhance the opportunities to realise the productive potential of natural rural resources
- Promote the efficient and effective utilisation of natural rural resources
- Promote sustainable opportunities for countryside living
- Maintain and enhance the quality and quantity of water resources
- Preserve and enhance remaining indigenous ecological resources and enhance their contribution to biodiversity, landscape, and amenity values
- Protect natural character, outstanding landscape features and values
- Recognise and provide for enhancement of those landscape values that contribute to the sense of enjoyment and appreciation of living in rural areas
- Recognise and provide for the life supporting capacity of high quality soils and their contribution to the economic and social well-being of Auckland.

Approach to drafting plan provisions

Unitary plan provisions that can give effect to this resource management regime could have the following objectives:

Objectives for Sustainability of the Natural and Physical Environment

1. To recognise and provide for enhancement of those landscape values that contribute to the sense of enjoyment and appreciation of living in rural and coastal areas.
2. To maintain and enhance the quality and quantity of water resources.
3. To preserve and enhance remaining indigenous ecological resources and enhance their contribution to biodiversity, landscape and amenity values.
4. To protect natural character, outstanding landscape features and values.
5. To recognise and provide for the life supporting capacity of versatile land and its contribution to the economic and social well being of the District.
6. To protect and preserve the taonga of Tangata Whenua.
7. To enhance opportunities to utilise the productive potential of natural resources in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Objectives for Rural Growth Management

8. To promote the safe, efficient use, development and protection of physical resources, including roads, water supplies and sewage schemes and other infrastructure.
9. To manage growth in rural areas through a preference towards the majority of growth being within villages and some growth opportunities in a directed and identified rural countryside living zone and a rural environmental enhancement overlay area, which together avoid the inappropriate and wide dispersal of lots throughout rural areas.
10. To provide for sustainable growth in appropriate villages through zoning, structure planning and/or concept planning and appropriate subdivision and land use controls.
11. To provide limited and directed opportunities for living in rural and coastal areas through the rural growth management hierarchy:
 - a) Predominantly within:
 - i. the dedicated rural countryside living zone, and
 - ii. the identified rural environmental enhancement overlay area; and
 - b) Outside of the areas identified in a) above, more limited and small-scale opportunities for subdivision where significant environmental benefits are gained through the protection, enhancement, and/or restoration of the natural, physical and cultural environment, and where adverse effects on rural character and amenity are avoided, remedied or mitigated.
12. To provide directed opportunities for living in the rural and coastal zones by avoiding adverse effects on the productive use of versatile land and mineral resources, through a rural environmental enhancement overlay, adjustment of lot boundaries and Transferable Rural Lot Rights.
13. To manage rural land use conflicts that balance the expectations of new residents with the need to recognise and protect existing rural activities and their typical effects and characteristics to ensure conflicts and reverse sensitivity issues are avoided, remedied or mitigated.

Spatial expression of this approach

Planning maps could identify the following areas:

- Rural settlements, divided into five categories depending on their growth potential
- Rural areas where rural production is the principal purpose
- Rural areas where mixed rural production and other rural and non-rural related activities are the principal purpose

- An east coast area where rural and non-rural development already exists, and which are under significant development pressure
- The Tasman, Kaipara, and Awhitu coastal areas, which are relatively remote from development pressure has limited existing development
- Countryside living areas, where fragmented subdivision patterns are well established in a combination of hobby farms and large lot residential uses
- Areas of bush where there are opportunities for residential occupation as well as retention of bush, and where farming would be inappropriate because of the rugged terrain
- Islands

Council could develop a set of outcomes for each of these areas, to:

- Describe their development potential
- Identify appropriate uses for these areas
- Guide the drafting of standards for subdivision and development
- Help define the thresholds at which resource consent and plan change applications for particular types of use, or significance of environmental effect, would be triggered,.

Some plans in the region have zoned rural land according to its land use.

In rural settlements, for example, this technique results in a very detailed and unnecessarily complex pattern of zoning. It can also be a device for licensing some land uses. For example, where commercial use of land can occur only on commercially zoned sites, the owners of those sites hold the only opportunities for commercial development in the village. Other land may be just as suitable for commercial use, but unable to be developed without a change in zoning. This situation should be avoided.

An alternative approach would be to start with the presumption that all sites in a village are suitable for residential use, and some may be suitable for other, supporting uses (such as local shops). If the outcome for the village is adequately described, then the resource consent process for approving the non-residential use can focus on the land use effects it will have, and the amenity values of the village as a whole can be maintained.

In rural areas (not settlements), zones and overlays within management areas can be used to enable some uses, and exclude others. This will allow the outcomes for the eight areas described above to be achieved.

Landuse provisions

In rural areas, landuses fall naturally into seven groupings:

1. Houses and other forms of accommodation

2. Growing plants, crops, trees, or raising animals
3. Modifying the land through earthworks, quarrying, mining, and the like
4. Processing, handling, or otherwise doing something with rural produce
5. Community facilities, services, and utilities
6. Activities that have nothing to do with rural activities or the rural area, other than they are located there
7. Activities that are not wanted in rural areas.

A set of definitions that relate to rural areas can be derived from these groupings. These will provide a lead-in to drafting the landuse provisions of the unitary plan, and setting appropriate standards for each management area, zone, and overlay/schedule.

1. Where people live (terms include house, dwellinghouse, residential building, flats, multi-unit housing, papakainga housing, special housing development, unit).
2. Where visitors stay (terms include farmstay accommodation, travellers' accommodation, camping ground, marae, motel, motorcamp).
3. Growing plants, crops, trees, or keeping animals outside (terms include agriculture, beekeeping, forestry, feedlot, pig keeping, factory farming, farming, forestry, glasshouse, horse training, horticulture, intensive farming, pastoral farming poultry, boarding kennels, rural research, spray irrigation). This cluster divides naturally into:
 - a. Keeping animals outside most of the time
 - b. Keeping animals in buildings
 - c. Growing plants outside
 - d. Growing plants in buildings
 - e. Growing trees for harvesting
4. Working from home (terms include farmstay, handcraft, home enterprise, home occupation)
5. Recreation and leisure (terms include active recreation, motorised sports, equestrian centres, war games, dog racing, community facility, reserves, tourist facilities).
6. Earthmoving (terms include earthworks, clean fill, aggregate extraction, exploration, prospecting, cemeteries, swimming pools, utility trenching, farm quarries, mining, soil conservation/flood control works/stopbanks).
7. Social and community activities, gatherings of people (terms include community facilities, child care, learning centre, marae, papakainga, kokiri centre, school, cemeteries, churches).

8. Processing rural produce and products, rural industries (terms include depot, packhouse, packing shed, processing produce grown or produced on-site, rural services, veterinary services, portable sawmills, rural contractors' depots, saleyards, airstrips for farm use)
9. Retail uses (produce stall, home occupations).
10. Activities not wanted (can include fitch keeping, landfills).

Subdivision provisions

Councils in the Auckland region found rural subdivision a difficult issue. There are many reasons for this, including:

- There is no shortage of applicants willing to try and find a way to subdivide rural land.
- There are often conflicting political imperatives.
- Councils have sometimes been at odds with the Regional Council.
- The legislation has changed, and the national directive to preserve high quality soils was withdrawn in 1991.
- Titles in large parts of the rural area have already been fragmented, and are often small. In places, whole "towns" were subdivided, but never developed.
- There is variable information about rural resources. The "economic farming unit" was a management tool for trying to match the productive potential of land with the size of the lot being created. It met with mixed success. Councils sometimes required investment in horticulture (such as building a glasshouse or planting a shelter belt) before a subdivision was finally approved. This proved an unsatisfactory management tool, as it was often seen as no more than a tax on development.

These and other factors have resulted in many parts of the rural area becoming closely subdivided (in the context of rural land uses), and Councils feeling compelled to provide for the construction of new houses on all but the smallest lots.

Innovative subdivisions have been approved, in an attempt to change the modus operandi from the "economic unit" benchmarks established under previous legislation, to a "sustainable management" solution desirable under the RMA.

The management areas approach being suggested will enable Council to deal in a cohesive manner with the different pressures to subdivide land, the different underlying title patterns, topography, land cover, and proximity to urban Auckland that exists in different parts of the region.

It is normal for plans to have no permitted activity subdivision. Unlike landuse development, a degree of intervention is expected before subdivision of land proceeds.

Most plans have a “general subdivision” provision, that is, a minimum lot area which will be approved irrespective of the actual land use or soil quality. But many parts of the region have already been subdivided to this density, so further subdivision in these areas normally requires more rigorous justification. General subdivision, minimum lot provisions are simple to administer, and can operate with relative low transaction costs. If large enough, it probably achieves what it sets out to achieve: a simple provision for settled farming and forestry. If necessary, balance areas can be “tagged” to prevent further fragmentation.

Lots for network and other utilities have specific requirements. The unitary plan can provide a relatively simple management tool to provide for them. It is useful to provide for public works that are being constructed following designation rather than resource consent.

Boundary adjustments and relocations are a useful mechanism to enable existing allotment boundaries to be adjusted to conform to more recent land uses or to “fix” historic survey problems. The criteria for assessing this type of subdivision can be simple and robust.

Subdivision for conservation purposes, or “environmental enhancement” lots, in return for the creation of a house (i.e. rural-residential) lot can be a useful way of:

- Protecting indigenous bush, wetlands, and other natural features by attaching a covenant to the title,
- Achieving the retirement of cleared land and its replanting in indigenous vegetation, and
- Gaining riparian planting that will filter runoff and improve stream water quality.

These subdivisions are useful if they achieve their purpose of preserving the natural feature or features in perpetuity. Care is needed to ensure they are not so open-ended that they allow multiple houses in locations where road access is unsatisfactory, or where clusters of houses has not been planned for.

Some plans go further and provide for the house lot to be located in a different location from the land being covenanted. This enables the effects of development to be managed in a planned way, as the houses can be clustered in a location where they are anticipated, and able to be appropriately serviced.

Subdivision for “transferable rural lot rights” or “transferable title relocation” is a management tool used to enable a reduction in the latent potential⁷ of rural areas. This mechanism works by providing an incentive for the owner of more than one title in a rural location to amalgamate those titles, and sell the right to the lots that disappear to a landowner in another location, giving them the right, which they would not otherwise have, to subdivide their land.

Identification of management areas will enable the subdivision provisions described above to be “targeted” to management areas where they will be of greatest benefit in achieving

⁷ See earlier definition.

the desired outcomes for those areas. Conversely, these subdivision opportunities can be unavailable in areas where they would be counterproductive, for example, if they resulted in high quality soils becoming unavailable .

Appendix A

Assessment of existing Auckland plan provisions

	District/Regional Plan	General Observations
1	Auckland Central	The Auckland Central Plan does not contain rural provisions.
2	Auckland Isthmus	The Auckland Isthmus Plan does not contain rural provisions.
3	Hauraki Gulf Islands	<p>Due to the more effects base approach of the Hauraki Gulf Islands Plan it was harder to extract the rural issues as they were grouped into strategic management areas which included higher level aspirations.</p> <p>The Rural Landforms identified as relevant to the rural environment also dealt with rural residential development.</p> <p>This highlighted that a zone based approach to this task can be limiting as does not consider all the effects that can occur within the rural environment.</p> <p>These effects such as landscape, coastal, natural environment and heritage etc will have been picked up in other reports specific to those topics.</p>
4	Franklin District Plan	<p>Franklin's resource management issues were well identified and explained for the reader.</p> <p>They are rural specific and address all the issues that are considered to apply to rural land. The issues did differ to other plans in that they were very descriptive and almost read like explanatory statements. This made it harder to pull out the issue and fit it into one topic. As a result some of the issues were broken down as part of this exercise in order to add them to the table.</p>

		It was considered that there was a sensible flow from the higher level issues down to the objectives and policies in the Franklin District Plan. Each of the policies related to how an objective was going to be achieved. The objective then linked with the issue that was identified for the rural area was.
5	Manukau District Plan	<p>The rural issues were easy to extract as there was a single sentence in bold (and numbered) which was the resource management issue. Under this was the explanatory description of the issue and examples of why it is an issue for the rural environment. Rural issues were located in both the higher level chapter on the Cities Resources and in the Rural Chapter of the Manakau Plan.</p> <p>Manakau has four Rural Zones. The same set of objectives and policies applied to all of these four zones.</p>
6	North Shore District Plan	North Shore Plan had the largest variety of rural issues when compared to the other plans.
7	Rodney District Plan	<p>Rodney had a range of specific one sentence issues that covered the majority of issues at a higher level which were considered to be specific to the Rural Zone.</p> <p>Rodney had very prescriptive list of policies (many of which related to the natural environment which could have perhaps be contained in an overlay or another section that deals with the natural environment). The most prescriptive policies were included as part of the specific zones. These policies were very long and contained numerous points which demonstrated in great detail how the objective could be achieved.</p>
8	Papakura District Plan	<p>The Papakura District Plan has some higher level issues on Rural Amenity.</p> <p>It also has issues that are specific to each of the Rural Zones. Having issues at the specific zone level resulted in some repetition.</p> <p>It was considered that the Papakura policies were short and succinct the majority started with the words “by providing/ensuring” etc... it is noted that this is the same approach to policy wording/writing</p>

		as the Hauraki Gulf Islands Plan.
9	Waitakere District Plan	<p>The Waitakere Plan was harder to compare with the other activity/zone based plans.</p> <p>It is considered that the effects bases approach a valuable way to structure a plan due to having effects based legislation and since many of the environmental effects are the same regardless of zone.</p> <p>For this specific task however this way of organizing the Plan made it hard to extract the issues that related solely to the rural environment.</p> <p>This may also be the case for people using the plan in terms of finding out what is expected in the rural zone and what this zone provides for. Another possible downside to the Waitakere approach is that some of the specific rural issues – for example fragmentation of rural land, latent potential of lots and the potential for conflict etc.. are not explicitly identified. It is considered that there is some merit in identifying the issues that are of particular importance to the rural environment.</p>
10	Auckland Regional Policy Statement	<p>The ARPS clearly identifies the issues for the region in a user friendly and concise way. It is considered that while in general an RPS contains very high level guidance this is perhaps more prescriptive than earlier versions. Many of the policies seemed to read like assessment criteria. They identified what matters were to be considered in achieving the related objective and issue. It was considered that the provisions in the ARPS were clearly defined, concise and to the point.</p>

Appendix B

Summary of Rural Topics covered in the Issues Objectives and Policies

Topic	Comments
Rural Amenity	Rural amenity is a consistent topic and identified as an important issue in the rural environment. Amenity is also used in conjunction with character in many of the issues, objectives and policies. Aspirations that related to amenity include the need to maintain/protect and enhance amenity. The policies that relate to amenity include matters such as managing the size and location of buildings, providing for well designed developments, avoiding adverse effects, building in harmony with the surrounding natural features and ensuring the developments are adequately serviced. These policies relate to amenity in rural areas generally, rather than solely to amenity in rural zones only.
Rural Character	Assessment of rural character is a criterion used to assess proposals in specific parts of rural areas, with proposals being expected to maintain existing rural character. It is also used more generally where rural issues identify the need to maintain rural character and identify the circumstances when character can be adversely affected. Character is an assessment matter raised in all of the plans. Character is also associated with protecting surrounding natural features such as landscape and heritage values. The policies that relate to character are similar to that of amenity and include controls on the scale, form and location of buildings, avoiding adverse visual effects, limiting density of buildings, building design, and complementing and protecting surrounding natural features. Many of the policies would be given effect to through development standards and terms at the time rural land is subdivided.
Provide for Rural Use	Five of the eight plans include “provision for rural uses” as a significant issue. Many of the objectives focus on the need to prevent incompatible uses in rural areas (also covered in non-rural uses in a rural zone) and to provide for rural uses in general. Policies are enabling, encouraging rural uses the rural zone (subject to environmental controls). For example, more intensive activities are identified as being provided for in the North Shore City Plan as Discretionary Activities, and the Auckland Regional Policy Statement (ARPS) identifies the need to provide adequately for infrastructure and services that serve and support the rural community.

<p>Non-Rural Activity in the Rural Zone</p>	<p>Only two of the plans identify non-rural activity in rural zones as a significant issue and contain an objective on this matter. However many plans include policies relating to this matter. This issue is also addressed under other issues and objectives, such as protecting rural land for rural uses. Policies for addressing the issue of non-rural land in rural areas include limiting non-rural activities, protecting amenity values from non-rural activities, limiting the scale of non-rural activities, limiting the potential for adverse cumulative effects of non-rural activities and looking at better locations for non-rural activities. This topic also overlaps with ‘fragmentation of rural land’ and ‘protection of high quality soils’. Activities not dependent on soil resources can include both rural and non-rural activities, and typically plans tend to restrict their establishment in the rural zone.</p>
<p>Fragmentation of Rural Land</p>	<p>This is specifically covered in three of the Plans. It also appears under the issue of ‘protecting rural land’. The main rural councils – Franklin, Rodney and North Shore identify this as an issue. All of their rural areas are located on the edge of urban areas, and experience significant pressure for land subdivision. In some rural parts of these former Council areas rural land has already been compromised. The ARPS identifies ‘preventing the fragmentation of rural titles’ as an objective for the rural environment.</p>
<p>Latent Potential</p>	<p>Latent potential in rural areas – or the number of vacant / undeveloped lots with development rights that have not been exercised – was identified in the Franklin District Rural Plan Change 14 as a significant issue. This filtered down to objectives and policies which were given effect to through the provision of transferable titles. The Rodney District Plan has similar transferrable title rules, although most latent potential has been taken up.</p>
<p>Protect Rural Land</p>	<p>The protection of rural land includes protecting the amenity values of rural land, protecting the soil, protecting rural land from subdivision, and protecting rural land from urban sprawl and non-rural activities.</p>
<p>Heritage</p>	<p>Heritage was often combined with landscape and ecological character aspirations.</p>

Recreation/ Conservation/ Leisure	The Hauraki Gulf Islands Plan notes this numerous times. It is also found in many of the policies of the Auckland Plans in terms of providing recreational values and supporting existing regional parks and other reserve types that are considered to be within the rural area.
Infrastructure	Infrastructure is covered in terms of it being necessary to support development and rural activity. It is also used to support the need to locate urban forms of development in well serviced areas (and not the rural environment). Special standards were required for infrastructure in rural areas. Some plans seek to ensure rural character is protected. Infrastructure also relates to ensuring the safe and efficient functioning of the transportation network. This is of relevance to many zones and urban Auckland generally, as well as the rural area.
Cultural	Most plans include cultural elements with the rural issues, objectives and policies. These represent the section 8 matters of the RMA. At the policy level, direction includes recognising and providing for papakainga housing including marae, specific iwi connections to ancestral land, and archaeological sites.
Diversity	Issues consider how to provide for a mix of rural activities and land management techniques without compromising rural character. Objectives include enabling activities that support the rural economy (this was only in the ARPS and could be seen as a gap in the other plans). Policies addressed allowing a range of lot sizes, providing for minor household units and providing for a range of activities. Diversity is noted as a more general aspiration that would be applicable to a number of zones.
How to distinguish between urban and rural, town and country uses and areas	Two of the plans identified this as an issue. The Rodney District Plan addresses this matter most thoroughly in terms of objectives and policies and there was good flow from the issue, objective and policy on this topic. The remaining plans are not so strong on this topic. The Hauraki Gulf Islands Plan and Papakura District Plan (prior to rural plan change 13) include some policy direction on this; the other Plans do not.

Expansion of urban areas into rural areas	This topic is the same as above (how to distinguish between urban and rural, town and country uses and areas). This is another variation of the issue of growth management. A number of plans deal with this at a higher level.
Landscape	Landscape is covered by all of the eight plans at the policy level. The landscape is seen as an important aspect to protect, and all of the Councils had policies that were designed to do so.
Natural Environment/ Ecological	The natural environment is a common feature in rural provisions. The policy direction is based around affording appropriate protection to these areas, and acknowledging their value in terms of character, natural values, and biodiversity. Natural environment, ecology and indigenous vegetation makes up the most common or largest number of provisions in the rural environments. This is in addition to the majority of the plans having higher level issues, objectives and policies for the natural environment, with some having dedicated sections on the natural environment. Another report dealing with the natural environment has been prepared.
Building Controls	These came out solely in the policies as ways to achieve the issues and objectives. Building controls in the rural environment included form, scale, location, colour, height, design and appearance. Many of these exist in the context of maintaining rural character and ensuring special features such as landscape, heritage and natural environment values are protected.
Conflict/ Reverse Sensitivity	Some plans have policies that relate to ways in which the potential for conflict or reverse sensitivity can be managed. While conflict can be a matter that is relevant to other zones, the rural zone has specific issues relating to conflict. The effects based plans deal with this in a generic way, but in the Manukau and North Shore Plans there is an absence of specific policies relating to conflict. This also appears under the issue "protect rural land".
Soils	Protecting highly productive soils is raised as a specific issue, objective and policy in five of the eight plans. Of these plans, only two mentioned the word "versatile" soils. One of the objectives stated it would protect the life supporting capacity of the soils as far as practicable.

Water	Water is dealt with in the same limited way as soils (above). The same five Plans that contain provisions on 'soil resources' have similar provisions for water.
Minerals / Quarries	A number of the general rural section and zone issues, objectives policies contain provisions specific to quarrying. Quarrying is provided for in the rural environment in most plans, although some use a specific extraction zone for larger scale quarries or sand extraction, which further fragments the zoning structure of the plan. This also appears under the issue of "reverse sensitivity".