

Section 25 – Rural Area

25.1 Background

The Rural Area comprises over 125,000 hectares of land (approximately 57 % of the District's total area) and is separated into two zones: the Rural Zone and the Rural Lifestyle Zone. Traditionally the Rural Area had only a few types of land use, such as pastoral farming and plantation forestry. Over time land use in the Rural Area has diversified to encompass forestry, horticulture, 'lifestyle' opportunities, land-based marine and aquaculture activities and industry that supports primary production activities.

The Rural Zone is a place where most of the District's primary production is located. It is an active work area that contributes to the social and economic wellbeing of the District but is also a place where people live and use for recreation. The wide uses of the Rural Area can lead to 'reverse sensitivity' effects where largely residential activities conflict with traditional rural activities that generate noise, smell, dust and other effects that should be expected in the Rural Area. The Rural Lifestyle Zone provides a buffer between settlements and the Rural Zone. In this zone residential use on large lots is expected as well as rural activities. For the Rural Zone, Rural character is as described in Section 59.2 Rural Zone Purpose.

It is important to strengthen the District's economy by providing for an on-going range of land use activities in the Rural Area. However the priority is to sustain the productive capacity of the soil and the rural character and amenity values that are a key element of the District. The District's Coastal Environment Overlay also covers part of the Rural Area. The areas where this intersection occurs are subject to additional standards within Section 59 and 60 to protect the special values of the Coastal Environment.

The Rural Area contains some areas subject to the Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes overlay, Outstanding and High Natural Character overlay and Biodiversity provisions. Where these overlays are identified, activities in the Rural Area must also consider the relevant overlay objectives, policies and provisions.

25.2 Issues

1. Inappropriate subdivision, use and development in the Rural Area can:
 - a) Reduce the availability of high class soils for primary production;
 - b) Adversely affect rural amenity and character;
 - c) Adversely affect the District's natural, cultural, amenity and historic values;
 - d) Contribute to the loss or fragmentation of indigenous vegetation and habitat.
2. Residential activities in the Rural Area can create reverse sensitivity effects that need to be managed to protect the productive potential of the land and the viability of activities that rely on the Rural Area.
3. Inappropriate development in the Rural Lifestyle Zone can contribute to:
 - a) The loss of rural character;
 - b) Isolation or fragmentation of areas of indigenous vegetation;

- c) A progressive encroachment of urban development and services into the Rural Area, including provision of reticulated water, wastewater and stormwater services resulting in adverse effects on the naturalness and character of the Rural Area.
- 4. Subdivision, use and development can detract from the natural values of the Coastal Environment by:
 - a) Being inappropriately located;
 - b) Being visually dominant, intrusive or of a scale that detracts from the surrounding landscape;
 - c) Degrading the natural characteristics of the Area;
 - d) Development spreading outside of its naturally contained area in existing settlements leading to ribbon development and adverse effects on landscape, natural character and amenity values.
- 5. Reverse sensitivity effects can result from inappropriate subdivision, land use and development that compromises the safe and efficient operation of network utilities in the Rural Area.

25.3 Objectives and Policies

Objective 1

A variety of land uses occur in the Rural Area, making efficient use of natural and physical resources.

Policy 1a

Primary production and rural industrial activities in the Rural Zone should occur where adverse effects on rural character are remedied or mitigated.

Policy 1b

Large lot residential development in the Rural Lifestyle Zone shall be self-sufficient in respect of water, wastewater and stormwater services.

Policy 1c

Subdivision in the Rural Zone shall be provided for, where appropriate, where priority areas of indigenous vegetation or other areas of significant indigenous vegetation are restored or enhanced and legally protected.

Policy 1d

Infrastructure for harbour, aquaculture and renewable energy generation facilities that provide social and economic benefits should be provided for in the Coastal Environment.

Policy 1e

Subdivision, use and development in the Rural Zone catchment of the Whangamata Harbour shall demonstrate that it will not adversely affect the function, access to, use and enjoyment of the Whangamata surf bar.

Objective 2

The District's rural land resource is safeguarded for primary production.

Policy 2a

The scale and intensity of residential, commercial and industrial activities in the Rural Zone shall be limited to retain the availability and versatility of high class soils for primary production.

Policy 2b

Subdivision, use and development for lifestyle activity in the Rural Zone shall be directed away from high class soils and shall not restrict access to significant mineral resources identified on a publicly available map held by the Council.

Objective 3

The viability of existing lawfully established activities in the Rural Zone is not compromised by new sensitive land use activities that would create reverse sensitivity conflicts.

Policy 3a

Residential activities may occur in the Rural Zone where they do not create reverse sensitivity effects.

Policy 3b

Existing lawfully established activities (including farming and quarry activities) in the Rural Zone shall operate without being compromised by non-rural activities requiring higher levels of amenity.

Policy 3c

New intensive farming and industrial activities that establish in the Rural Zone shall be located and managed in a way that avoids effects from noise, odour, dust, vibration, glare and light spill that are not compatible with the rural amenity of the area.

Objective 4

Subdivision, use and development in the Rural Area maintain the rural character and amenity of the zone in which they are located.

Policy 4a

Subdivision, use and development in the Rural Area should be in keeping with the character and amenity of the zone in which they are located. In particular they should not generate significant increases in dust, odour or other nuisance effects beyond those expected in the zone.

Policy 4b

Activities in the Rural Area shall be self-contained with regard to water, stormwater and wastewater servicing.

Policy 4c

Activities in the Rural Area shall ensure that there is sufficient quantity and quality of water supply for anticipated occupants and for fire-fighting demands.

Policy 4d

Buildings in the Rural Area should be sited in a manner and designed to a scale, density, and height which complement the character and amenity of the zone in which they are located. In particular they should:

- a) Maintain the character of the Rural Area; and
- b) Maintain amenity values in terms of scale, appearance or density.

Policy 4e

The restoration or rehabilitation of modified or degraded natural character is promoted.

Objective 5

The safe, secure and efficient use and operation of network utilities is protected from the adverse effects of other land use activities in the Rural Area.

Policy 5a

Subdivision, use and development shall be designed and located to avoid activities and vegetation close to network utilities where they may compromise the ability of the network utilities to be operated, maintained and upgraded safely and efficiently.