

SECTION 2.6 LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL STRATEGY

2.6.1 INTRODUCTION

Over a number of years, there has been a growing desire by a significant section of the community to live in a rural environment, while still being able to work within the urban centres, or undertake a mixture of urban and land based employment. There is also a small but consistent demand for residential accommodation throughout the rural area of the Hastings District from people who wish to reside and/or work in the rural areas.

Rural residential and lifestyle developments also provide the opportunity for the community to slow the continued decline of its rural population. In recent years there has been a reduction in the number of children enrolled at rural schools, and there has been a withdrawal of both public and private services for the rural areas. While many rural residential dwellers still rely heavily on the urban infrastructure of the Hastings District, they do have the effect of increasing the rural population and can contribute to the development of stronger communities in the rural area.

The provision for rural residential (lifestyle accommodation) was recognised by the Hawke's Bay Section of the previous Transitional District Plan, which introduced a Rural Residential Zone in 1984. This zone, based on land of lower productivity, but located within convenient commuting distances of Hastings, Napier, and Havelock North, proved to be extremely popular, and a number of extensions to it occurred over the years.

The increasing popularity of this form of housing was also recognised in the Hastings Urban Development Strategy study carried out in 1993/94. Rural residential development forms a significant part of the overall residential development strategy adopted as an outcome of that study, and the provision of rural residential land to accommodate demand in the market, is an accepted part of the Council's adopted residential strategy. (See Part A, Section 2.4 of the Hastings District Plan).

Another form of low density residential development, known as 'lifestyle blocks', have also developed in the rural areas, capitalising on the previous 6 ha minimum subdivision lot size which applied to them. Their popularity in recent years has reflected existing constraints in the availability of rural residential sites.

A survey of the use of these 6 ha lifestyle blocks, undertaken by the Council as part of its Hastings District Plan review, highlighted a concern with the excessive size of these '6ha' blocks for lifestyle purposes. It also confirmed the need to make provision for farmers and other rural landowners to manage their land resource flexibly. For many, this involves having the option to realise the capital value of surplus land or buildings, as part of their business management practices.

Effective and sustainable use of the Hastings District's land resource, is also an issue on the Heretaunga Plains, where there is ongoing demand for lifestyle type development. The utilisation of small existing sites on the Plains, and the provision for further rural residential style development at Maraekakaho provide opportunities to address this demand, without undermining the potential of the remaining Plains land resource for sustainable, independent production.

The adoption of a low density residential strategy also complements Council's wider strategy for residential development, by directing houses away from land capable of more intensive utilisation, and by reducing pressures for urban expansion of the residential zones.

The District Plan also recognises that there are some increasingly well defined environmental issues associated with the development of residential and semi-residential activity in the rural and plains settings. Water supply, and the potential effects of conflicting land use activities and practices need to be recognised and managed by the District Plan. Similarly areas traditionally targeted for rural residential development also have wider landscape and cultural values, which the District Plan needs to respect and protect. Rural residential development therefore needs to be carefully integrated into its surroundings to avoid the environmental consequence of incompatible activities operating in close proximity to each other.

The District Plan endeavours to draw together all strands of the low density residential issue and provide a comprehensive and integrated policy response. It recognises the need to provide for a range of opportunities for low density residential development to occur in the Hastings District, and enables the market to pursue those options which best meet demand.

2.6.2 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- ***Low Density Residential Development may adversely affect the sustainable management of the Rural and Plains resources.***

Low Density Residential Development is an increasingly popular way in which people wish to use the rural and plains resources to meet their economic, social and cultural needs. The District Plan should not unnecessarily inhibit those needs being met. Uncontrolled and rapid lifestyle development however, has the potential to adversely affect the sustainable management of the rural resource base, particularly on the Plains. Of concern to the Council is the effect that such developments can have on the finite characteristics of the soil resources through building coverage, tracking, water extraction and effluent disposal. In addition it is concerned that closer subdivision and development may not sustain the potential of the soil resource to meet the foreseeable needs of future generations to use it in a variety of ways. Accordingly, the Plan seeks to manage low density residential development in the Plains and Rural areas cautiously at first and to monitor and review the rate and effect of such development. Residential Farm Parks provide an opportunity to minimise the fragmentation of the land resource, while allowing a low density residential option.

- ***Site sizes for low density residential development should be of a size suited to demand.***

While the previous 6 hectare minimum subdivision site size provided an option for low density residential development in the District, a review of the use of these sites, undertaken as part of the District Plan review, revealed that 6 hectares was generally too large for low density residential requirements. There is a need to ensure that any subdivision policy developed for low density residential development in the District Plan addresses the need to match subdivision site sizes to the needs of such developments.

- ***Conflicts can often arise between low density residential activities and other activities on adjoining land.***

By its nature, low density residential development tends to be attracted to certain parts of the rural area, because of the particular combination of activities already established there, and the character or aesthetic values which those activities give to the area. For example, a number of low density residential developments are attracted to areas with established vineyards. These activities, can however, often be in conflict with one another, where the effects of adjoining rural activities may not be compatible with the expectations of low density residential development. This can include for example, complaints about the use of agricultural sprays, or noise from farm machinery, bird scaring devices, frost control equipment, or traffic movement and the generation of odours and dust. Low density residential development can also adversely affect the adjoining farming activities by restricting their operations. In relation to such conflicts the 'Right to Farm' as is outlined in the Rural Resource Strategy (Section 2.8) will apply.

The District Plan needs to seek to manage these effects. This suggests that areas of low density residential development should be aggregated to enable potential interface issues to be minimised. There is also a need for the District Plan to recognise that the areas where low density residential development occurs are generally productive areas which have associated with them, a degree of nuisance which cannot be avoided.

- ***Low density residential development is often associated with Significant Landscape Character Areas, natural areas, or historic and cultural features.***

Low density residential development is often attracted to elevated areas because of the views or perspectives they provide. Many of these areas are however, Significant Landscape Character Areas (see Section 12.2 of the Plan) and such development may adversely affect those landscape values, particularly where they occur on the skyline or ridges. Additionally many of the areas where such development locates may also be high in natural, historic or cultural values (see Sections 12.4, 12.5 and 13.5 of the Plan). The District Plan needs to ensure that these issues are addressed as part of any low density residential subdivision or development.

- ***Responsibilities for meeting servicing requirements.***

The development of future low density residential development areas will be dependent on the suitability of the land to provide stable building sites and to meet servicing requirements for water supply and sewage and stormwater disposal. This includes the ability to deal with hazards associated with fire. This will be particularly important in elevated areas, such as the Havelock Hills.

- ***Low density residential development can adversely affect natural environments such as wetlands, lakes, rivers and their margins.***

Low density residential developments will need to be managed to ensure that the character and value of these environments are retained.

2.6.3 OBJECTIVE

- ***LDO1 To enable a range of low density residential development options in response to market demand, in a comprehensive, flexible and integrated manner, while avoiding, remedying or mitigating any adverse effects on the environment.***

2.6.4 POLICIES

- **LDP1 Provide for ongoing development throughout the Hastings District for a range of low density residential activities.**

Explanation

The District Plan encourages continued low density development opportunities. Different standards are adopted to reflect the potential impact that such development can have on the sustainable management of the land resource, and on the amenity of different parts of the Hastings District. Low density residential development will be required to acknowledge existing rural amenity levels and the Right to Farm.

- **LDP2 Consider applications for requests for Private Plan Changes to extend the Rural Residential Zone.**

Explanation

While the District Plan continues to provide for a Rural Residential Zone, it does not attempt to identify new areas in the District where the Rural Residential Zone can be extended. This is because the Council does not have sufficient information on the extent of market demand for additional low density residential development, or on which localities are capable of sustaining such development. Instead, it is considered more appropriate that any initiatives to extend the zoning should be driven by the market. The Council will therefore consider any applications it receives for requests for private plan changes to extend the Rural Residential Zone.

•LDP3 **Examine requests for Private Plan Changes to extend the Rural Residential Zone against relevant Objectives and Policies of the Plan.**

Explanation

In assessing any requests the Council receives for private plan changes to extend the Rural Residential Zone, particular regard will be had to the statutory requirements of the Council, to the following objectives and policies of the District Plan;

- Waahi Tapu sites (see Section 12.4 of the District Plan on the Waahi Tapu Resource Management Unit)
- Heritage Items and Trees (see Section 12.5 of the Plan on Heritage Items and Trees Resource Management Unit)
- Sustainable management
- Protection of areas identified as Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes (see Appendix 12.2-1 of Section 12.2 of the Plan on the Landscape Areas Resource Management Unit)
- Retention of Significant Landscape Character Areas (see Appendix 12.2-2 of Section 12.2 of the Plan on the Landscape Areas Resource Management Unit)
- Suitability with respect to topography, geotechnical constraints and the ability to adequately dispose of sewage and stormwater in a manner which avoids pollution of aquifers and watercourses. (See Section 15.1 of the Plan on Subdivision and Land Development).
- Size, scale and location of proposed extensions
- Market demand trends
- Application of all other objectives, policies and rules for the Rural Residential Zone (see Section 7.0 of the Plan)

•LDP4 **Ensure that any extension of the Rural Residential Zone is on land which is either contiguous to existing Rural Residential Zoned land, or is of a substantial area, to ensure that the effects associated with the interface of Rural Residential Zone activities with adjoining activities in other zones are minimised.**

Explanation

In considering requests for private plan changes to extend the Rural Residential Zone, the Council will ensure that any additional Rural Residential Zoned land is not isolated from existing Rural Residential Zoned land, and is not sporadic in nature. Where new rural residential areas are proposed these should be capable of accommodating a minimum of 20 contiguous sites. This is to minimise potential conflict between activities in the Rural Residential Zone and adjoining activities in other zones.

•LDP5 **Avoid the establishment of new Rural Residential Zones in areas identified in the Hastings District Plan as Outstanding Landscape Features and require the specific consideration of all development proposals within the Rural Residential Zone where they are located on land comprising one or more Significant Landscape Character Areas.**

Explanation

Rural residential developments tend to have a preference for elevated sites. However it is considered that on outstanding landscape features the development of semi intensive housing is generally inappropriate, and incompatible with the policies for these features. Rural residential developments also have the potential to detrimentally affect the landscape values identified for the Significant Landscape Character Areas of the Hastings District (see Section 12.2 of the Plan on Landscape Areas). An assessment will be required at the time of a subdivision consent application, and new buildings and earthworks will be a controlled activity to ensure that any development can be integrated with the landscape values of the area.

- LDP6** **Monitor the objectives, policies and rules of the District Plan to ensure that the Plan is responding appropriately to both market demand for low density residential development in the Hastings District, and to the effects of such development on the environment.**

Explanation

The effects of low density residential development will be monitored, together with the rate and pattern of development, in order to monitor the effectiveness of the objectives, policies and rules of the District Plan in meeting demand for low density residential development, while ensuring that any adverse effects of such development are avoided, remedied or mitigated. This will enable a further review of the low density residential development strategy during the life of the District Plan.

- LDP7** **Continually monitor the appropriateness of the lifestyle site subdivision rules applying to the Rural and Plains Zones to ensure that such subdivision is not adversely affecting the underlying sustainability of the District's rural land resource, the pattern of residential growth, or network utilities and other existing lawfully established activities.**

Explanation

The subdivision provisions of the District Plan are structured so that residential growth is concentrated in urban areas and the Rural Residential Zones in an integrated manner, but there is also some opportunity for people to live in the rural areas of the district through the lifestyle residential subdivision provisions in the Rural and Plains Zone. This policy seeks to ensure that the cumulative effects of such subdivision is monitored so that preventative action may be taken if such subdivision is impacting on the sustainable management of the District's resources or gives rise to issues of reverse sensitivity.

- LDP8** **Ensure that the effects of low density residential development in areas and sites which have recognised habitat and/or recreational values, including those specified in Appendix 13.5-1 and Appendix 13.10-1 and 13.10-2 are avoided, remedied or mitigated so that their character and values are retained.**

Explanation

This policy addresses concerns regarding the effects of low density residential development on or near sites recognised as having habitat or recreational values.

2.6.5 METHODS

These Objectives and Policies will be implemented through the following Methods.

- **Hastings District Plan**

Rural Residential Zone (Section 7.0): The District Plan will continue to provide for a Rural Residential Zone as the primary means of meeting demand for low density residential development in the Hastings District.

Urban Development and Strategic Urban Directions Policy (Section 2.4): This policy outlines Council's strategic vision for urban development in the Hastings District and complements the Low Density Residential Policy which establishes Council's direction for the development of lifestyle activities throughout the Hastings District.

Rural Zone (Section 5.0): The District Plan rules allow for the creation of 1.5 to 2.5 hectare Lifestyle Lots (provided the minimum size of the balance lot is 20 hectares), limited to the rate of one new Lot per existing title over a three year period from the date of public

notification of the Plan. This is intended to enable rural landowners to have an opportunity to realise the capital value of surplus land or buildings as part of their business management practices. Residential Farm Parks are also allowed and provide for lifestyle subdivision integrated with a larger farm (see Section 15.1 of the District Plan on Subdivision and Land Development).

Plains Zone (Section 6.0): The District Plan rules allow the creation of Lifestyle Lots of a minimum size of 2500m² as an incentive to amalgamate existing, non-complying sites to form complying sites (see Rule 15-1.8.3 of the District Plan).

Te Mata and Tuki Tuki Special Character Zones (Sections 11.1 and 11.2): These Zones allow the creation of Lifestyle Lots with a minimum area of 3 hectares, and residential lots forming part of a residential farm park, within the 'Lifestyle Area' identified within the Zone (see Sections 11.1 and 11.2, and Rules 15.1.8.3 and 15.1.8.6 of the District Plan).

Rural and Plains Zones: The District Plan rules allow one household unit per title on existing, non-complying sites. This will enable a number of existing, non-complying sites in these zones to have a residential dwelling on them. This will provide additional opportunities for low density residential development in these zones.

Papakāinga RMU (Section 13.1): This provides for Papakāinga (Maori Housing) on land defined as Maori Land under the Te Ture Whenua Maori Act 1993. The Objectives, Policies and Rules of the District Plan are flexible to encourage communal type housing.

Indigenous Vegetation and Habitats of Indigenous Fauna (Section 13.10): This Section identifies those sites which are of significant natural value, on which Conservation lots may be created.

Landscape RMU (Section 12.2): This Section identifies those areas where landscape values may need to be addressed if any low density residential development is proposed.

Waahi Tapu RMU (Section 12.4): This Section identifies the location of Waahi Tapu throughout the Hastings District. The development of land may be affected by the presence of Waahi Tapu.

Heritage & Trees RMU (Section 12.5): This Section identifies buildings and features in the Hastings District which may be subdivided in return for their protection in perpetuity.

Subdivision and Land Development Rules (Section 15.1): This Section establishes minimum subdivision site sizes, and criteria required to be addressed by Council for any proposed subdivision and/or amalgamation of land for sites to be utilised for low density residential activity.

The rules provide for the creation of Conservation Lots as an incentive for the legal and physical protection of areas of native bush or other features of biological or scientific significance, or recognised heritage features in perpetuity.

The rules provide for continued low density residential development within a 1 kilometre radius of the Maraekakaho Hall, as was allowed for under the Maraekakaho Locality rules of the previous District Plan. The rate of uptake of development in the locality will be monitored and reviewed as part of the review of future lifestyle activity in the Rural Zone.

Natural Hazards RMU (Section 12.3): This Section requires that developments ensure that any adverse effects in areas of known natural hazards can be avoided, remedied or mitigated.

- **Hastings Urban Development Strategy**

This strategy has established residential development requirements for the Hastings District over a 20 year horizon. The HUDS study will be reviewed to ensure that all residential

activity will be reviewed and policies in the District Plan adjusted to have regard to development trends and projected demand.

2.6.6 ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

It is anticipated that the following outcomes will be achieved.

- The sustainable management of the Hastings District's land resource.
- Protection of the potential of the Hastings District's land and soil resources for a range of sustainable activities.
- Mitigation or avoidance of any significant adverse effects of low density residential development on other adjoining activities and on each other.
- Protection of outstanding or significant landscapes, natural areas and historic or cultural features.
- Existing non-complying sites in Plains and Rural Zones will be better utilised.
- A more even balance between supply and demand for low density residential options without significant adverse environmental effects.
- Provision of a comprehensive, integrated and flexible mix of low density residential development options to meet actual demand in a sustainable manner and over a long term.