

SECTION 2.8 RURAL RESOURCE STRATEGY

2.8.1 INTRODUCTION

Ninety two percent of the Hastings District's land area can generally be described as rural in nature, and is predominantly utilised by activities that rely on the natural resources of the environment. This rural area is covered by a Rural Zone, a Plains Zone, a Rural Residential zone, and the Te Mata and Tuki Tuki Special Character Zones. This 'rural' resource plays a significant role in shaping and enabling the well being of the Hastings District principally through the utilisation and development of its natural and physical resources. The rural area of the Hastings District incorporates a wide variety of land and soil types, which when combined with the Hastings District's climate are capable of sustaining an extensive range of agricultural and other activities. The establishment of an overall strategy for their sustainable management is an important part of the District Plan.

In addition to the land resource, the rural area of the Hastings District contains a large number of small and extended communities, including a number of marae. Significant tracts of the rural area are also held as part of the nation's conservation estate. The area also contains a number of Outstanding and Significant Landscape Features, and an array of heritage buildings and sites.

The rural area of the Hastings District has historically been associated with pastoral activities, which have supported service and processing activities in the urban areas. Changing national and international markets have resulted in a growing diversity of activity on land throughout the Hastings District, and this has assisted the development of a more robust economy in the area. Within the rural area there is significant competition for land as well as for access to the soil and water resources, and areas close to the urban centres and the hills surrounding the Heretaunga Plains face considerable pressure to accommodate increased urban activities and residential housing.

The Resource Management Act requires Council to ensure that the soil resources of the Hastings District are managed sustainably for both present and future generations. It also requires the Council to manage the effects of land uses. The District Plan therefore needs to ensure that the Rural Resources of the Hastings District are properly identified and appropriate objectives and policies put in place to enable the ongoing development and utilisation of the resources in a sustainable manner.

2.8.2 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- ***Ensuring the Sustainable Management of the Hastings District's Rural Resources.***

The key feature of the rural area of the Hastings District is the opportunity to accommodate production based on differing combinations of soil, water and climate. In addition to this, certain resource combinations are only available in defined geographic areas, or are available only in a limited way. The District Plan needs to respond to these different circumstances in order to ensure that the available resources are utilised in an efficient and sustainable manner. The need to carefully identify the nature, and extent of the available rural resources, and to manage them is highlighted by the increasingly specialised requirements of activities directly utilising the soil and water resources of the area, and by increasing demand from other activities seeking to locate in rural areas.

The District Plan should enable rural resources to be used responsively to changes in demand and investment opportunity. Ensuring the long term availability of a sustainable land resource is a key component in achieving this. In addition, the Plan should not unnecessarily hinder the development of associated infrastructure and processing linkages.

The Council also has a role to play in the provision of efficient transport networks (through investment in the transport network), to control the effects of activities on infrastructure and

the environment and to enable these physical resources to be used and developed efficiently and effectively. This can be achieved both through the District Plan and Council's investment in the transport network under the Local Government Act 1974 (see Section 2.5 Transportation).

The District Plan will however need to ensure that the diversification of activity does not undermine the principal life supporting capacity of the Hastings District's soil resource and its ability to meet the needs of future generations, particularly where this may only exist in finite qualities or quantities, or increase amenity conflicts.

The District Plan needs to ensure that it addresses the sustainability of the resources that exist in its rural area. This may involve limiting certain activities, and where finite resources are identified, actively controlling access to them. The District Plan also needs to address and review the concepts of sustainability, and this will involve the critical examination of activities which may threaten the sustainable use of the land resource, including current land use practices.

- ***Managing Reverse Effects (enabling 'the Right to Farm').***

Increasing diversity of activity, and in particular the development of low density residential activity throughout the rural area, has the potential to increase conflict due to the interface of effects associated with both existing agricultural and a range of new non-land based activities.

The District Plan will need to determine what level of amenity it will adopt in rural areas. In this sense amenity means how noise levels, odour strength, air quality and visual appearance may detract from or contribute to the overall pleasantness and attractiveness of the rural environment. Therefore, high rural amenity levels are characterised by low unnatural noise and odour levels, clean air and a pleasant visual appearance. However, the inherent nature of land based productive activities, means that intermittently high noise levels will be produced when agricultural machinery is being used, stock is being moved or held, or crop protection mechanisms are activated. These activities may also result in increased odour levels and reduced air quality. Therefore, current amenity levels in the rural areas of the Hastings District are characterised by fluctuations in noise and odour levels, air quality and visual appearance due to both routine and seasonal land based primary production management practices.

Enforcing excessively high amenity levels without regard to these fluctuations may lead to established management practices and activities becoming unsustainable, thereby undermining the very activities that generate attraction into the area. The 'Right to Farm' recognises that there are well established 'amenity levels' associated with the principal activities of the area, and that new or emerging activities must acknowledge these amenity standards, as part of the ongoing operation and development of the rural resources of the Hastings District. It further recognises that non-land based activities must endeavour to integrate their amenity expectations with those which are reasonably being achieved in the rural environment. This does not suggest that the community should not expect to see the agricultural sector improve its amenity performance nor does it remove the duty expressed in Section 17 of the Act to avoid, remedy or mitigate the negative effects associated with an activity. The District Plan should therefore ensure that the Best Practicable Options are utilised to ensure that amenity levels are maintained and improved over time throughout the Hastings District. Best Practicable option in the Plan means, in addition to its meaning under the Act, the use of the most effective and efficient industry practices given available technology.

- ***Pressure on the Rural Resource Close to Urban Centres.***

There is significant pressure on rural land close to the urban centres of Hastings and Havelock North to accommodate additional residential, commercial and industrial activities. This demand is generated from activities which seek to complement the agricultural activities in the area, and from those who desire to utilise the rural ambience, or increase their marketing profile by locating on selected high traffic routes through the rural area. This

reflects lifestyle and marketing preferences by the business community. In addition there is a general pressure to expand urban boundaries onto the adjoining rural area. While some accommodation of these is inevitable it should not be allowed to occur in an ad-hoc manner, but rather as part of a wider integrated strategy for urban development.

The area under the most direct pressure corresponds largely to the land immediately beyond the urban periphery, and land located between existing urban centres. If the conflicting demands are not carefully managed, there are likely to be increasing amenity conflicts, which will weaken the ability to efficiently and economically manage the physical resources of the area, and damage the long term sustainability of the resource base. The District Plan must set a clear strategy to manage the demand pressure for urban activities which reflects the community's need to balance the future of both its urban and rural components.

Areas further beyond the immediate urban area are less prone to major development pressure, but are also generally more able to accommodate the loss of land, and manage any potential effects generated by activities. The District Plan must develop strategies that reflect the potential impact, and the level of threat to the resources of the Hastings District.

- ***Changing Traditional Expectations on the use of Land on Rural Land.***

Sections 6, 7 and 8 of the Resource Management Act 1991 (the Act) require Council to address in its plan a range of matters, including the protection of Outstanding Landscapes and Natural Features, the preservation of significant indigenous native vegetation, heritage and to have regard to the provisions of the Treaty of Waitangi. Many of these features and elements occur in the rural area of the Hastings District, and have the potential to affect the use of the land resource. The District Plan must endeavour to address these requirements comprehensively without undermining the ability of landowners to continue with the effective use and development of the resources of the area. However, there may be instances where matters of National Importance, Other Matters, or Treaty of Waitangi obligations as described in Sections 6, 7 or 8 of the Act, dictate that specific controls need to be imposed.

2.8.3 OBJECTIVES

- RO1 *To promote the maintenance of the life-supporting capacity of the Hastings District's rural resources at sustainable levels.*
- RO2 *To enable the efficient, and innovative use and development of rural resources while ensuring that adverse effects associated with activities are avoided, remedied or mitigated.*
- RO3 *To enable the effective operation of land based production activities within established amenity levels in the rural areas of the Hastings District.*
- RO4 *To ensure that the natural, physical, and cultural resources of the rural area that are of significance to the Hastings District are protected and maintained.*

2.8.4 POLICIES

- RP1 **Reflect the various characteristics and distribution of the rural resources, to enable the sustainable management of these characteristics.**

Explanation

The District Plan identifies the key resource combinations that make up the Hastings District's rural area. Where distinctive and finite differences in the availability of these resources are apparent, and where ensuring the long term sustainability of those will benefit from tailored management regimes, the District Plan establishes distinct zones.

The District Plan provides a Rural Zone, Plains Zone, Te Mata Special Character Zone, and a Rural Residential Zone, to manage the sustainable use of activities in the rural area. In addition, a small number of discrete industry specific zones are included in the District Plan to accommodate established industrial nodes in the rural area.

- RP2 **To enable rural activities which might generate adverse effects such as noise or smell, to operate in rural areas in accordance with accepted practices, without being significantly compromised by other activities demanding higher levels of amenity.**

Explanation

The rural areas of the Hastings District support a wide range of activities, and have amenity levels associated with supporting a range of agricultural processing activities. Emerging activities, and in particular lifestyle residential users will need to recognise existing amenity levels, which are characterised by fluctuating noise levels (and other potential adverse effects) when establishing in the rural areas. The Plan will however control such effects to provide a level of amenity which protects people's health and safety and minimises adverse effects as far as is practicable.

- RP3 **Provide for a wide range of activities to establish which complement the resources of the rural area, provided that the sustainability of the natural and physical resources of the area is safeguarded.**

Explanation

The District Plan will encourage a wide range of activities both within and beyond the traditional agricultural field to be established throughout the rural areas. However, their establishment will not be allowed to occur in a manner that threatens the long term sustainable and economic use or enjoyment of the Hastings District's natural and physical resources.

- RP4 **Establish mechanisms within the District Plan that will address the protection of outstanding landscape and natural areas, and items or areas of heritage or cultural significance but which also maximise the opportunity to sustainably utilise the resources of the rural area.**

Explanation

The District Plan will adopt a variety of mechanisms to recognise and protect Outstanding and Significant landscapes, Natural Areas, Heritage sites and Waahi Tapu. The District Plan will endeavour to avoid blanket controls that stymie the utilisation and development of the Hastings District's natural and physical resources, by the use of innovative mechanisms and carefully targeted controls, that enable activities to effectively avoid, remedy or mitigate their potential impact on the elements to be protected.

- RP5 **Rural land close to urban areas or on arterial or national traffic corridors will be managed to avoid sporadic and uncontrolled conversion to activities that will individually or cumulatively adversely affect the sustainability of the rural resource base and the efficiency of the road network.**

Explanation

There is significant pressure from urban activities to expand onto rural land close to the present urban areas, because of marketing or other financial advantages. The District Plan does not provide for the uncontrolled conversion of rural land to a range of residential, commercial or industrial activities. Such activities can adversely affect the sustainable use of rural resources by: amenity conflict, where new activities (particularly residential) anticipate and desire a higher level of amenity than neighbouring rural productive activities can provide; reducing the life supporting capacity of the soil resource and its availability to future generations through impervious ground coverage; and

reducing the safety and efficiency of national or arterial traffic routes through an increased number and use of road access ways. The District Plan will encourage the development of these activities in urban areas, to ensure the controlled development of urban activities at the interface with the rural area (see Section 2.4 Urban Development and Strategic Urban Directions).

2.8.5 METHODS

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

- **Hastings District Plan**

Rural Zone (Section 5.0): The Rural Zone encompasses the bulk of the Hastings District's rural land. This area is suitable for a wide range of activities to occur, that can require exclusive areas of land and establishes the flexibility for landowners to identify opportunities to innovatively utilise the resources of the area. Controls in this Zone are tailored to provide flexibility for landowners.

Plains Zone (Section 6.0): The Plains Zone is distinguished by the fertility of its soil resource, the gravel areas of the old riverbeds, and by its proximity to the urban centres of Hastings and Havelock North. Standards in this Zone reflect the more intensive nature of activities, the increased interface between different land uses and the proximity of the zone to the urban centres on the Heretaunga Plains.

Te Mata and Tuki Tuki Special Character Zones (Section 11.1 & 11.2): These Special Character Zones in the District Plan enable Council to recognise areas which have a particular combination of Resource Management Issues, and to target Objectives, Policies and the regulatory environment to achieve a range of particular Outcomes.

Rural Residential Zone (Section 7.0): This Zone provides the main opportunity for low density residential development in the Hastings District. Additional residential opportunities are provided through the Plains Zone and Rural Zone provisions, Conservation Lots and Papakainga development.

Industrial 4 (Whirinaki) and 6 (Specific Industrial) Zones (Section 10.0): These provide for the continued use and development of specific industrial plants, or localities which are well established in the rural area of the Hastings District.

Resource Management Units: These identify specific Resource Management features, and develop policies, rules and methods to address these. The District Plan includes rules for Waahi Tapu, Outstanding and Significant Landscapes and Heritage, all of which are well represented in the rural areas of the Hastings District.

Special Purpose Zone: Regional Sports Park (Section 11.3): This Zone provides for the establishment of a comprehensively planned regional sports and recreation facility. The need for such a facility has previously been confirmed by the Council and the preferred site identified near Hastings in the rural area following a detailed analysis of alternative sites. The Zone has implications particularly with respect to the sustainable management of rural land close to urban areas or on arterial or national traffic corridors.

- **Hawke's Bay Regional Policy Statement and Plans**
- **Land Information Memoranda: Right to Farm**

When requested, people wishing to establish in the rural area will be issued with a Land Information Memorandum, advising them that they are establishing in a productive agricultural environment, where amenity standards associated with the normal conduct of farming operations in the zone, (that is, amenity standards that allow for fluctuating noise, odour and air quality levels resulting from accepted land based primary production

management practices) will be upheld by the Council. Provided that these activities are carried out within the provisions established by the District Plan, the effects shall not be considered a nuisance.

- **Industry Codes of Practice**

The Council will continue to liaise with industry groups to establish appropriate standards and practices for different activities. Where mutually accepted standards can be established, these will be incorporated, as appropriate, into the District Plan.

2.8.6 ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES

The following outcomes are expected.

- The continued availability, development and utilisation of the life supporting capacity of the Hastings District's soil resources for a range of activities.
- The improved understanding of sustainable land practices, which promote the long term life supporting characteristic of the soil resource.
- An attractive and economically sustainable rural environment that provides opportunity for a stable rural population.
- An increased diversity of activity in the rural area.
- The protection and enhancement of the rural amenity.