

## 8 Sustainably managing our rural environment - Toitū te tuawhenua

### *Me tupu te ora ki te tuawhenua*

Grow your livelihood inland

#### **Introduction**

Rural land is defined as land outside the RUB and the limits to the rural and coastal towns and villages. The rural environment is subject to growth pressures from urban expansion and non-rural activities seeking to locate in rural areas.

Under the RMA, the council has a role to protect the production potential of the land to provide for future generations and to protect rural areas for their contribution to regional values, particularly landscape, natural character and indigenous biodiversity.

The role that rural and coastal towns and villages play in accommodating Auckland's growth is set out in Rural and Coastal Settlement zone. This part focuses on managing the rural environment to retain and use its productive potential, biodiversity values, rural character and amenity values.

#### **8.1 Rural activities**

##### **Objectives**

1. Rural areas are a significant contributor to the wider economic productivity of Auckland.
2. Rural communities undertake rural production and other activities that support them while rural character is maintained.
3. Auckland's rural areas outside the RUB, and rural and coastal towns and villages, are protected from inappropriate subdivision, urban use and development.

##### **Policies**

1. Encourage the economic development potential of rural areas by supporting a diversity of rural activities that are based on the productive potential of the land and on the economic, social and cultural expertise of rural residents.
2. Activities typically associated with rural areas should:
  - a. depend on the use of rural resource
  - b. require a rural location
  - c. predominantly serve residents in rural areas.
3. Manage activities in rural areas so that:
  - a. there is no increase in urban activities
  - b. activities are of a type, scale, location and density that maintain or enhance the rural character of the different land use types
  - c. there is no significant increase in traffic generation that would require the premature upgrading of the local road network
  - d. they do not result in a significant or premature demand to provide, upgrade or provide water and wastewater infrastructure
  - e. adverse cumulative effects on rural values and the objectives of the rural zones are avoided.
4. Manage reverse sensitivity conflicts by preventing sensitive activities (such as rural lifestyle living) from

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establishing in areas zoned rural production, mixed rural, and rural coastal.

5. Support management practices that contain adverse effects from rural production activities on the site.
6. Require new rural lifestyle living to adopt on-site methods to avoid reverse sensitivity impacts on existing rural production activities. Countryside Living zones, and sites in rural zone areas, should provide adequate separation between dwellings and rural production uses.
7. Maintain a range of site sizes in rural areas, particularly large lots, to ensure adequate choice for primary production activities, including large farm holdings.
8. Encourage improved land management practices in rural production areas to progressively reduce adverse environmental effects, particularly from sediment and contaminant discharges into freshwater bodies and the CMA.
9. Protect and manage the natural character of the coastal environment, wetlands, lakes, rivers and their margins, ONLs and indigenous biodiversity in rural areas, while avoiding increases in scattered rural lifestyle lots.
10. Enable the location and operation of significant infrastructure, including renewable electricity generation, in rural areas.
11. Avoid subdivision and development that would result in sensitive activities (such as rural lifestyle living) being introduced into areas containing significant mineral resources.

### Methods

#### Regulatory

##### Unitary Plan

- Auckland-wide objectives, policies and rules for activities affecting natural resources.
- Zones objectives, policies and rules for Rural Production, Mixed Rural, Rural Coastal, Rural Conservation and Countryside Living zones.
- Overlay objectives, policies and rules for natural heritage, natural resources and Mana Whenua.
- Precinct objectives, policies and rules for rural areas.

Bylaws: for animal keeping

#### Non regulatory

Non-statutory plans and strategies

Advocacy and education

Monitoring and information gathering

Funding and assistance

#### Explanation and reasons

The policies seek to ensure that uses and subdivision do not undermine the productive potential of Auckland's rural areas, while maintaining those qualities (such as rural or coastal character) which the community values. The use and subdivision rules are intended to protect those areas valued by the community for their rural qualities, such as character or productive ability, so they remain rural and are not compromised now or in the future by urban activities, urban growth, or inappropriate rural activities.

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## 8.2 Land with high productive potential

### Objectives

1. The subdivision, use and development of elite and prime land is managed to maintain its capability, flexibility and accessibility for primary production.
2. The productive potential of land of lower soil quality is recognised.

### Policies

1. Avoid new rural lifestyle living subdivision, use and development on elite and prime land.
2. Encourage activities that do not depend on using elite and prime land to locate outside these areas.
3. Recognise the productive potential of lesser soil quality together with other conditions such as favourable microclimate, good drainage, water availability or established physical, economic or social infrastructure and encourage the continued use of this land for rural production.
4. Enable the continued operation of existing non-soil dependent horticultural enterprises on elite or prime land where there are economic and operational benefits associated with concentrating such industries in specific rural localities.
5. Encourage land management practices that retain the physical and chemical capability of high quality soils.
6. Support the allocation of water to areas of elite and prime land and to the areas of non soil dependent horticulture.
7. Provide the ability to amalgamate sites and transfer their development potential into other appropriate locations in rural areas (such as Countryside Living zones).

### Methods

#### Regulatory

##### Unitary Plan:

- Auckland-wide objectives, policies and rules for subdivision in rural areas
- Zones objectives, policies and rules for rural production, mixed rural, rural coastal, rural conservation and countryside living zones.

##### Bylaws

#### Non regulatory

##### Non-Statutory plans and strategies

- Farm plans

##### Advocacy and education

##### Monitoring and information gathering

- Studies of highly productive areas to increase their resilience to adverse climatic events, and other ways of maintaining their productivity without degrading natural environment such as water quality.

##### Funding and assistance

- Enhancement funding for restoration programmes/planting
- Funding catchment management programmes (eg Mahurangi – Hoteo river)

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- Funding – beach clean ups

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### **Explanation and reasons**

Land of high productive potential for farming includes elite land (LUC Class 1) and prime land (LUC Classes 2 and 3). This land is mapped on the Land Use Capability maps. The priority in these areas is to maintain the potential for these high quality soils to be used for agricultural purposes, rather than activities that are not dependent on soil quality.

However, there are other areas of rural Auckland that support specialised horticultural production, particularly viticulture, which are not on Class 1, 2 or 3 soils. These areas have other advantages such as climate, drainage, water availability or established infrastructure that are equally beneficial as soil quality.

No matter what type of rural production occurs, retaining land with high productive potential for primary production gives us flexibility to improve our economic performance, sustainably manage our land resources and enable communities to strive for more sustainable lifestyles.

Significant areas of high productive potential have been lost to the expansion of metropolitan Auckland and countryside living development, resulting in the physical loss of land to buildings and hard surfaces. Rural lifestyle living produces a pattern of small sites that are impractical for intensive primary production due to their size, tenure and owner expectations. Therefore new rural lifestyle subdivision is to be directed away from elite and prime land and from other rural areas with recognised local production advantages. The subdivision rules allow the transfer of the residential development potential of existing sites from one place to another, and allow title boundaries to be adjusted or relocated to locations where they will more usefully enable the rural development potential to be realised.

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### 8.3 Rural subdivision

#### Objectives

1. Land subdivision does not undermine the productive potential of rural land.
2. Further fragmentation of rural land by sporadic and scattered subdivision for urban and rural lifestyle purposes is prevented.
3. The use and development of existing titles rather than subdivision of land for new sites is encouraged.
4. The amalgamation and transfer of rural sites to areas that can best support them is encouraged.

#### Policies

1. Use existing rural sites rather than create new rural sites.
2. Enable the permanent protection of substantial areas of high quality indigenous vegetation or wetlands to generate the ability to subdivide land in:
  - a. appropriate, identified Countryside Living zones
  - b. other receiver areas identified in the Unitary Plan
  - c. rural or coastal towns or villages identified as receiver areas.
3. Provide new subdivision for purposes other than for rural lifestyle living where it is for:
  - a. the creation of parks and reserves, including esplanade reserves
  - b. the establishment and operation of infrastructure
  - c. rural production purposes
  - d. marae, papakāinga, urupā and other activities that support Māori relationships with their land where this land is managed by the Te Ture Whenua Māori Land Act 1993
  - e. special circumstances that provide for economic, social or cultural needs of the local rural community, and that cannot be met through the use of existing titles.
4. Through subdivision, enable the transfer of the residential development potential of rural sites from one place to another, and the rearrangement of site boundaries, to promote the productivity of land in existing rural titles and to:
  - a. manage population growth across all rural zones
  - b. improve environmental outcomes associated with the protection of identified areas of high natural values
  - c. improve the management of reverse sensitivity conflicts
  - d. avoid increasing the demand for infrastructure in remote areas, or across areas of scattered development.
5. Provide new rural lifestyle subdivision in Countryside Living zones.
6. Manage the location, scale, density and extent of Countryside Living zones to:
  - a. avoid areas that would undermine the integrity of the RUB or compromise the expansion of the satellite towns of Warkworth and Pukekohe, and rural and coastal towns and villages
  - b. avoid areas of identified high natural values and elite and prime land
  - c. avoid areas that would constrain the operation of existing mineral extraction activities or access to known and accessible future resources
  - d. maintain and enhance landscape and amenity values within the zone

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- e. consider opportunities for future intensification and retrofitting within the zone, including opportunities to be receiver areas for transferable rural site subdivision
- f. avoid reverse sensitivity effects that hinder the continued operation or growth of existing rural activities, or the establishment of new rural activities.

### Methods

#### Regulatory

##### Unitary Plan

- Zones objectives, policies and rules for Rural Production, Mixed Rural, Rural Coastal, Rural Conservation and Countryside Living zones.
- Auckland wide objectives, policies and rules for land use and subdivision

##### Bylaws

#### Non regulatory

Non-Statutory plans and strategies

Advocacy and education

Monitoring and information gathering

Funding and assistance

#### Explanation and reasons

These policies recognise that a rural lifestyle is attractive to many Aucklanders and enable countryside living in identified areas while balancing this against the imperative to protect the productive potential of rural land as well as its rural amenity values.

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