

Waikato Proposed District Plan Chapter 16 Hearing – Raglan Character Notes

2 June 2020

The purpose of these notes is to set out the background and rationale for the consideration of the ‘special character’ of Raglan for the Chapter 16 hearing for the Waikato District Plan review.

The Waikato District Council (WDC) received submissions on the Proposed District Plan Review that suggested that Raglan has ‘special character’ and was different from the rest of the Waikato District. On the basis of the submissions, the character should be identified and where possible, protected through the Proposed District Plan, to the extent that it can be.

In response to the submissions, Isthmus were commissioned by WDC to assess the character of Raglan and to provide a report on whether Raglan has ‘special character’ and if so, what that character is. A series of maps were prepared, at a range of scales to look at the various attributes of a place that would normally contribute to its’ character. The attributes that were mapped, illustrated and described in the Character study are:

- Context (surrounding landscape);
- Tangata whenua and historic significance;
- Topography;
- Water bodies;
- Vegetation;
- Patterns (land use);
- Access and connectivity;
- Grain, layout and scale; and
- Open spaces.

To a large extent these attributes can be understood by spatial analysis, mapping, illustration and description¹. To better understand how these attributes contribute to the perception of the character of Raglan, a workshop was organised and facilitated by WDC and Isthmus², to engage with the submitters and other interested parties on the character of Raglan. Submitters were directly invited to the workshop and it was also advertised³, which led to other non-submitters attending. Attendees at the workshop were invited to identify and locate special characteristics of Raglan. In a second exercise, attendees were asked to identify and locate special characteristics from the list of attributes above.

The information from the workshop was assimilated and added to the maps that were prepared under the attribute headings above. Some attendees at the workshop also made more open or general statements about where Raglan and Whāingaroa sit within a broader tribal and regional context.

From the analysis and mapping of the attributes that contribute to character and the information that was gathered at the workshop it was assessed that Raglan does have ‘special character’. The ‘special character’ of Raglan that was identified includes⁴:

¹ See Section 2 of the Raglan Character Study for WDC, 22 April 2020.

² On Wednesday 11 March 2020, in Raglan.

³ On the local radio station.

⁴ See the Executive Summary and Page 32 of the Raglan Character Study for WDC, 22 April 2020.

- The strong **visual** and **physical relationship** between the township and the harbour, the coast and Mt Karioi.
- The **outward facing** nature of the underlying landforms.
- The **arrangement** and layout of the township across **peninsulas** connected by causeways and bridges.
- The **sinuous tree-lined coastal edge** formed by the peninsulas, providing extensive access to the harbour within the township.
- The **human scale** of development in Raglan township which provides a sense of openness within the settlement.
- The **'bowl'** like topography in which both Raglan township and Raglan (Whāingaroa) Harbour are set, with rising landform to the north, east and west separating the catchment from other parts of the Waikato District.
- The **relaxed** and **informal character** of the settlement developed over years through limited development pressure and the laid-back community and residents.

Many of the special character attributes are intrinsic to Raglan, Whāingaroa and the surrounding landscape context. For example, the relationship between the town, Whāingaroa and Mt Karioi results from its' location and the underlying landforms and topography of the town and its' wider context. These attributes are unlikely to be affected by the provisions of a District Plan⁵ to any great extent. They are simply part of the wider existing environment. These relationships could be explained or even accentuated by District Plan provisions, but any resulting change to these relationships would be relatively subtle.

Other attributes are more quantifiable or controllable. For example, the arrangement and layout of the township, the tree-lined coastal edge, the human scale of development and the relaxed and informal character of the settlement can all be influenced by District Plan provisions. Specific to these attributes of character, patterns of future urban development could be required to respect the underlying topography⁶, coastal edge trees could be protected, the scale of development could be controlled⁷ and the relaxed and informal character of the town could be protected through a relaxation in urban and road design standards⁸. Design Guidelines or Protocols for precincts of Raglan could help to stitch together the physical attributes that affect the character of the built form in the town.

In addition to the combination of intrinsic and more quantifiable, or controllable attributes of the special character of Raglan, the workshop identified other historic and perceptual attributes that are less obvious and accessible. For example, Tainui Awhiro identified an area of wider tribal landscape, extending both northwards and southwards along the coast that is important to understanding Whāingaroa for Tainui. Understanding this wider tribal landscape and an appropriate planning response to it will require further engagement with Tainui Awhiro than was achievable through a single workshop.

In addition to further engagement with Tainui Awhiro, some of the submitters, and in particular some that provided evidence on Chapter 16, have divergent views on what the character of Raglan is and what an appropriate planning response would be. Better understanding of the divergent views of submitters would assist in the development of provisions in relation to historic heritage protection and the enablement of higher density residential development.

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⁵ Within the context of the current RMA planning legislation.

⁶ If medium or high density residential development is deemed to be appropriate in Raglan, the specific attributes relating to its character should be protected through the placement and design of development typologies which do not currently form part of the character of Raglan. Areas appropriate for medium or high density residential development could be identified, or alternatively, areas that are not appropriate could be protected, for example along the coastal edge.

⁷ Particularly on the coastal edge – building height, maximum wall length, Height in relation to boundary, setbacks, etc.

⁸ Parts of Raglan have no kerb and chanel, footpaths are informal or are limited to one side of the street, streetlighting is minimal, etc.