

Chapter 3: Natural Environment

Proposed Waikato District Plan

Stage I

(Notified version)



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Chapter 3: Natural Environment

3.1 Indigenous Vegetation and Habitats

3.1.1 Objective – Biodiversity and ecosystems

- (a) Indigenous biodiversity values and the life-supporting capacity of indigenous ecosystems are maintained or enhanced.

3.1.2 Policies

- (a) Enable activities that maintain or enhance indigenous biodiversity including:
- (i) planting using indigenous species suitable to the habitat;
 - (ii) the removal or management of pest plant and animal species;
 - (iii) biosecurity works.
- (b) Consider the following when avoiding, remedying or mitigating adverse effects on indigenous biodiversity:
- (i) the required range of natural food sources;
 - (ii) habitats of threatened and at risk species;
 - (iii) ecological processes and corridors;
 - (iv) ecological sequences;
 - (v) migratory pathways;
 - (vi) pest plants and pest animals;
 - (vii) the Waikato river and its catchment;
 - (viii) natural character and landscape values of the area;
 - (ix) natural waterway habitats and hydrology;
 - (x) ecological corridors, natural processes and buffer areas;
 - (xi) legal and physical protection of existing habitat;
- (c) Provide for the removal of manuka or kanuka on a sustainable basis.

3.2 Significant Natural Areas

3.2.1 Objective – Significant Natural Areas

- (a) Indigenous biodiversity in Significant Natural Areas is protected and enhanced.

3.2.2 Policy - Identify and Recognise

- (a) Identify significant indigenous vegetation and habitats of indigenous fauna in accordance with the Waikato Regional Policy Statement and identify as Significant Natural Areas
- (b) Recognise and protect Significant Natural Areas by ensuring the characteristics that contribute to their significance are not adversely affected.

3.2.3 Policy - Management hierarchy

- (a) Recognise and protect indigenous biodiversity within Significant Natural Areas by:
- (i) avoiding the significant adverse effects of vegetation clearance and the disturbance of habitats unless specific activities need to be enabled;
 - (ii) remedying any effects that cannot be avoided; then
 - (iii) mitigating any effects that cannot be remedied; and
 - (iv) after remediation or mitigation has been undertaken, offset any significant residual adverse effects in accordance with Policy 3.2.4.

3.2.4 Policy – Biodiversity Offsetting

- (a) Allow for a biodiversity offset to be offered by a resource consent applicant where an activity will result in significant residual adverse effects on a Significant Natural Area, or on indigenous biodiversity outside such Significant Natural Areas.
- (b) Within a Significant Natural Area, a biodiversity offset will only be considered appropriate where adverse effects have been avoided, remedied or mitigated in accordance with the hierarchy established in Policy 3.2.3; and
- (i) the biodiversity offset is consistent with the framework detailed in Appendix 6 Biodiversity Offsetting; and

- (ii) the biodiversity offset can achieve no net loss of indigenous biodiversity:
 - A. preferably in the affected area of Significant Natural Area; or
 - B. where that is not practicable, in the ecological district in which the affected area of Significant Natural Area is located.

3.2.5 Policy - Biodiversity in the coastal environment

- (a) Avoid the adverse effects of subdivision use and development within Significant Natural Areas of the coastal environment on:
 - (i) indigenous species that are listed as threatened or at risk in the New Zealand Threat Classification System lists
 - (ii) habitats of indigenous species where the species are listed as threatened or at risk, are at the limit of their natural range, or are naturally rare
 - (iii) areas containing nationally-significant examples of indigenous community types
 - (iv) indigenous ecosystems and vegetation types that are threatened in the coastal environment, or are naturally rare, and
 - (v) areas set aside for full or partial protection of indigenous biological diversity under legislation.

3.2.6 Policy - Providing for vegetation clearance

- (a) Provide for the clearance of indigenous vegetation in Significant Natural Areas when:
 - (i) maintaining tracks, fences and farm drains
 - (ii) avoiding loss of life injury or damage to property
 - (iii) collecting material to maintain traditional Maaori cultural practices
 - (iv) collecting firewood for domestic use
- (b) Provide for the clearance of indigenous vegetation in Significant Natural Areas for the construction of building platforms, services, access, vehicle parking and on-site manoeuvring and the development of Maaori Freehold Land by:
 - (i) using any existing cleared areas on a site that are suitable to accommodate new development in the first instance;
 - (ii) using any practicable alternative locations that would reduce the need for vegetation removal;
 - (iii) retaining indigenous vegetation which contributes to the ecological significance of a site, taking into account any loss that may be unavoidable to create a building platform, services, access, vehicle parking and manoeuvring on a site;
 - (iv) Firewood.

3.2.7 Policy - Managing Significant Natural Areas

- (a) Promote the management of Significant Natural Areas in a way that protects their long-term ecological functioning and indigenous biodiversity values, through such means as:
 - (i) permanently excluding stock through voluntary covenants and conservation subdivisions
 - (ii) undertaking plant and animal pest control
 - (iii) retaining and enhancing indigenous vegetation cover
 - (iv) maintaining and restoring natural wetland hydrology
 - (v) avoiding physical and legal fragmentation
 - (vi) legal protection of Significant Natural Areas through conservation covenants or similar mechanisms
 - (vii) providing for the role of Mana Whenua as kaitiaki and for the practical exercise of kaitiakitanga in restoring, protecting and enhancing areas.

3.2.8 Policy – Incentivise subdivision

- (a) Incentivise subdivision in the Rural Zone when there is the legal and physical protection of Significant Natural Areas, provided the areas are of a suitable size and quality to achieve a functioning ecosystem.

3.3 Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes

3.3.1 Objective – Outstanding natural features and landscapes

- (a) Outstanding natural features and outstanding natural landscapes and their attributes are recognised and protected from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

3.3.2 Policy – Recognising values and qualities

- (a) Recognise the attributes of the district's mountains, bush clad ranges and hill country identified as outstanding natural features and outstanding natural landscapes including:
 - (i) ridgelines and valleys
 - (ii) significant ecological values
 - (iii) indigenous bush and the extent of this bush cover
 - (iv) cultural heritage values associated with these areas
 - (v) recreational attributes including walking and access tracks
 - (vi) existing water reservoirs and dams
 - (vii) existing pastoral farming activities on the margins of these areas
- (b) Recognise the attributes of the Waikato River delta and wetlands, Whangamarino Wetland and Lake Whangape identified as Outstanding Natural Features, including:
 - (i) natural geomorphology and hydrological processes;
 - (ii) significant habitat values;
 - (iii) significant indigenous vegetation;
 - (iv) cultural heritage values associated with these areas;
 - (v) recreational use of these areas; and
 - (vi) existing pastoral farming activities on the margins these areas.
- (c) Recognise the attributes of the west coast dunes identified as outstanding natural features, including:
 - (i) natural geomorphology, patterns and processes;
 - (ii) significant habitat values;
 - (iii) significant indigenous vegetation;
 - (iv) cultural heritage values associated with these areas; and
 - (v) existing pastoral farming activities on the margins these areas.

3.3.3 Policy - Protection from inappropriate subdivision, use and development

- (a) Ensure that the attributes of identified Outstanding Natural Features and Outstanding Natural Landscapes are protected from inappropriate subdivision, use and development by:
 - (i) requiring buildings and structures to be integrated into the outstanding natural landscape or feature to minimise any visual impacts;
 - (ii) managing the adverse effects of building platforms, buildings, driveways and roads through appropriate subdivision design;
 - (iii) requiring subdivision and development to retain views of outstanding natural landscapes and features from public places; and
 - (iv) avoiding the adverse effects of extractive industries and earthworks.

3.3.4 Policy - The relationships of Maaori with natural resources and land

- (a) Provide for the consideration of cultural and spiritual relationships of Maaori with Outstanding Natural Features and Outstanding Natural Landscapes as part of subdivision, use and development.
- (b) Provide for the development of Maaori Freehold Land, within Outstanding Natural Features and Landscapes, including within the Whaanga Coast Specific Area.
- (c) Provide for Maaori cultural and customary uses of natural resources, including land, water and other natural resources as an integral part of identified Outstanding Natural Features and Outstanding Natural Landscapes.

3.4 Significant Amenity Landscapes

3.4.1 Objective – Significant amenity landscapes

- (a) The attributes of areas and features valued for their contribution to landscape values and visual amenity are maintained or enhanced.

3.4.2 Policy – Recognising Significant Amenity Landscapes

- (a) Recognise the attributes which contribute to identified Significant Amenity Landscapes

3.4.3 Policy – Maintaining and enhancing Significant Amenity Landscapes

- (a) Maintain and enhance identified Significant Amenity Landscapes, during subdivision, land use and development, in particular by:
 - (i) requiring buildings and structures to be integrated into the Significant Amenity Landscape to minimise any visual impacts;
 - (ii) managing the adverse effects of building platforms, buildings, driveways and roads through appropriate subdivision design;
 - (iii) providing for the continuation of farming activities within hill country landscapes and volcanic features;
 - (iv) managing the adverse effects of earthworks; and
 - (v) promoting and encouraging maintenance and enhancement of their attributes.

3.4.4 Policy - The relationships of Maaori with their resources and land

- (a) Provide for the cultural and spiritual relationships of Maaori with Significant Amenity Landscapes during subdivision, use and development.
- (b) Provide for the development of Maaori Freehold Land within Significant Amenity Landscapes.
- (c) Provide for Maaori cultural and customary uses of natural resources, including land, water and other natural resources as an integral part of identified Significant Amenity Landscapes.

3.5 Natural Character

3.5.1 Objectives – Natural Character

- (a) The high and Outstanding Natural Character of the coastal environment is protected from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.
- (b) The natural character of wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins are protected from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

3.5.2 Policies – Recognising natural character

- (a) Recognise the following natural elements, patterns, processes and experiential qualities which contribute to natural character:
 - (i) areas or waterbodies in their natural states or close to their natural state;
 - (ii) coastal or freshwater landforms and landscapes;
 - (iii) coastal or freshwater physical processes, including the movement of water and sediment;
 - (iv) biodiversity;
 - (v) biological processes and patterns;
 - (vi) water flows and levels, and water quality; and
 - (vii) the experience of the above elements, patterns and processes.
- (b) Recognise the natural character qualities of the following areas within the coastal environment and identified on the planning maps as:
 - (i) Outstanding Natural Character areas; and
 - (ii) high (and very high) natural character areas.

3.5.3 Policy - Protecting the natural character qualities of the coastal environment

- (a) Protect the qualities of outstanding and high natural character areas in the coastal environment from inappropriate subdivision, use and development by:
 - (i) managing the adverse effects of subdivision, use and development;
 - (ii) avoiding significant adverse effects of subdivision, use and development;

- (iii) avoiding subdivision, use and development within areas of outstanding natural character, where it would damage, diminish or compromise natural character;
- (iv) avoiding activities that damage the stability of identified coastal dune systems;
- (v) requiring appropriate building setbacks from riparian and coastal margins;
- (vi) ensuring that activities are carried out in a way that maintains or enhances water quality in the coastal environment;
- (vii) enabling and concentrating development within existing settlements to avoid development sprawling along the coastline;
- (viii) recognising historic farming operations that continue today;
- (ix) avoiding the establishment of new plantation forestry.

3.5.4 Policy - Protecting the natural character of wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins

- (a) Protect the natural character qualities of wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins from inappropriate subdivision, use and development by:
 - (i) ensuring that location, intensity, scale and form of subdivision, use and development are appropriate;
 - (ii) minimising, to the extent practicable, indigenous vegetation clearance and modification (including earthworks, disturbance and structures);
 - (iii) encouraging any new activities to consolidate within, and around, existing developments or, where the natural character and landscape values have already been compromised, to avoid development sprawling; and
 - (iv) requiring appropriate setbacks of activities from wetlands, lakes and rivers.