



RURAL ZONE - POLICY

RU2.1 Introduction

The natural resources of the rural environment in the Ruapehu District provide the basis for the existing and potential character, intensity and the scale of the use, development or protection of land. The natural resource base comprises elements of geology, soils, topography, drainage, climate and vegetation. All are closely inter-related.

Imposed on these natural factors are numerous social, economic and cultural factors. These include technology, settlement pattern, cultural belief systems, political climate, infrastructure, utilities and transportation facilities.

The rural areas of the District support significant activities including farming, horticulture and forestry. These are important to both the District and the national economy. Council wishes to see these activities continue. Therefore, in general terms, the rural areas are recognised as places where rural activities should be subject to minimal control, provided the activities are managed sustainably and do not generate unacceptable environmental effects. The rural environment also contains significant infrastructure, such as the National Grid; it is important that development does not compromise the operation, maintenance and upgrading of this infrastructure.

The rural environment also offers a range of lifestyle opportunities. It provides a low density environment offering rural scenery and a rural lifestyle. These aspects are often sought by people wishing to reside in the rural environment. These same features are also utilised by people partaking in the recreation and tourism opportunities which exist in the rural areas. However, the establishment of these activities should avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on the rural environment, including reverse sensitivity effects on existing activities. Council recognises that the location of incompatible or sensitive land uses, adjacent to lawfully established activities that require a rural location, can adversely affect the operation and viability of these existing activities.

RU2.2 Issue: Rural Environment

- (a) Degradation and loss of the values of the rural environment caused by unsustainable use of natural and physical resources.

RU2.2.1 Objective

- (a) A rural environment promoting the establishment and continuation of a range of activities while ensuring the rural environment is sustainably managed.

RU2.2.2 Policies

- (a) To ensure that activities established in the rural zone are based on the natural resources of the rural environment and are environmentally sustainable. This shall be achieved by ensuring that:
 - (i) Amenity values are maintained and enhanced;
 - (ii) The quality of the rural environment is maintained and enhanced; and
 - (iii) The adverse on site and off site effects are avoided, remedied or mitigated.
- (b) To ensure that any Waste Disposal Activities are only undertaken where any adverse effects on the environment are avoided, remedied or mitigated.



- (c) To ensure that the adverse effects of noise are avoided, remedied or mitigated.
- (d) To avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of the prospecting, exploration, extraction or processing of minerals. This shall be achieved by ensuring that:
 - (i) Activities maintain the life supporting capacity of air, water, soil, ecosystems and habitats.
 - (ii) Activities avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on adjoining properties, and people and communities.
 - (iii) Appropriate site rehabilitation occurs, including progressive reinstatement where appropriate.
 - (iv) Measures are undertaken to protect waterways from adverse effects.
- (e) To ensure that the risk of fire to people, property and significant areas of indigenous flora and fauna is minimised.
- (f) Where consent is required, buildings, roads and structures are sited so that they minimise the disturbance to existing natural features, including prominent landforms, areas of native bush, wetlands, streams and their margins.
- (g) Stormwater treatment and management systems are designed to integrate into the landscape, to minimise stormwater runoff resulting from development and to protect water quality and any associated ecosystems and habitats.

RU2.2.3 Explanation of Policies

These policies seek to provide flexibility in the manner in which rural land can be utilised. The policies seek to ensure that, for all activities, adverse environmental effects are avoided, remedied or mitigated. The policies recognise that while providing flexibility for activities to occur in the rural areas there are some activities which produce adverse environmental effects and should be controlled. The policies also recognise that the continuance of sustainable rural activities is desirable.

The policies are necessary in order to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. The policies identify the main effects which are to be addressed in the Rural Zone that require avoidance, remedying or mitigation.

In relation to fire, Council recognises that many rural areas are relatively isolated and, in the event of a fire, it is likely that it will be some time before fire appliances can attend a fire. However, Council recognises that the risk of fire in rural areas is relatively low and does not wish to place undue emphasis on this issue. As such, Council will assess applications on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the risks, including the isolation of the property in relation to fire stations and risks to adjoining properties and significant areas of indigenous flora and fauna, along with any mitigation measures.

Policy (f) addresses the location of buildings, roads and structures. There are a number of buildings and structures which can be constructed without the need for resource consent, for example, farm sheds. However, where consent is required for new buildings, roads and structures this policy aims to ensure that they are sited to minimise the impact on the natural environment.

Policy (g) aims to ensure that stormwater associated with development does not adversely affect the surrounding environment.

RU2.3 Issue: Rural Character and Amenity

- (a) Development within rural areas compromising rural character and amenity values.
- (b) Potential loss of rural amenity values and quality of the rural environment as a result of sporadic or fragmented development within the Rural Zone, or ribbon development being established in the vicinity of an urban zone.



- (c) Fragmented patterns of development resulting in the inefficient use and development of existing infrastructure, including roading and reticulated services and potentially undermining existing urban areas.

RU2.3.1 Objective

- (a) To maintain rural character and rural amenity values.
- (b) To maintain rural amenity values and the quality of the rural environment from sporadic or fragmented development, and from ribbon development.
- (c) To ensure the efficient use of existing physical resources, including community utilities and roading, by avoiding fragmented patterns of development that do not promote the community's social and economic wellbeing.

RU2.3.2 Policies

- (a) To manage the effects of activities within the Rural Zone to ensure that rural character and rural amenity is maintained, especially on the periphery of urban areas.
- (b) To avoid sporadic, fragmented or ribbon residential development where it would, individually, or cumulatively, detract from rural character or rural amenity values.
- (c) To avoid activities that within the Rural Zone, that either individually or cumulatively could result in the inefficient use of existing urban community infrastructure, or would result in the inefficient expansion, upgrading, or development of community infrastructure in the vicinity of an urban zone (excluding in the townships of Ohura and Pipiriki - see policy (d) below).
- (d) To take a more permissive approach to development in close proximity to Ohura and Pipiriki in recognition of the need for economic development within these areas, while still ensuring that the general rural amenity and character is not adversely affected.

RU2.3.3 Explanation of Policies

Policies (a) and (b) are general policies aimed at retaining rural character and amenity given that rural activities already provide for a range of activities.

Rural character and amenity may include the characteristics identified below. However, it is recognised that each specific site has a unique character and the final determination of a site's "character" will be made on a case by case basis, dependent upon the actual environment of the specific site for which resource consent is sought.

- (a) A high ratio of open space relative to the built environment;
- (b) Significant areas of vegetation in pasture, crops and/or forestry;
- (c) A rural working production environment landscape;
- (d) Presence of farmed animals;
- (e) Noises, smells and effects associated with the use of rural land for a wide range of agricultural, horticultural and forestry purposes;
- (f) Low population densities relative to urban area;
- (g) Existence of some narrow and/or unsealed road; and
- (h) General lack of urban infrastructure for example, generally no footpaths or street lighting and no reticulated water or wastewater facilities.

The remaining policies seek to:

- (a) Retain the rural environment on the fringe of urban forms;
- (b) Protect the community's investment in infrastructure; and
- (c) Recognise the need for economic development in Ohura and Pipiriki.



The retention of the rural environment on urban fringes is important, firstly, to maintain and enhance the amenity values and quality of these areas and, secondly, to enable the existing urban forms to be managed sustainably.

With the proliferation of development with urban characteristics, there is pressure for the community to provide the appropriate urban services, such as water, sewerage, stormwater, sealed roads and lighting, to name a few. Experience indicates that often the pressure comes after the establishment of the activities. Further, existing development is used as a reason to seek further intensification of the activities, which does not recognise the cumulative effects.

The final policy – policy (d) recognises the need for economic development around Ohura and Pipiriki and, as such, allows for a more flexible approach to be taken when Council is assessing resource consent applications, while still ensuring the rural character is not degraded.

RU2.4 Issue: Land Surrounding Conservation Land

- (a) Subdivision and land use in the rural zone adjoining the Tongariro National Park generating adverse effects on the valued characteristics within this area.

RU2.4.1 Objective

- (a) To ensure the effects of land use in areas in close proximity to the Tongariro National Park avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects on the environment including landscape values, biodiversity values and general amenity values of Conservation Land.

RU2.4.2 Policy

- (a) Require applications for resource consents for activities within 500m of the Tongariro National Park to demonstrate that adverse effects from inappropriate subdivision, use and development on the valued characteristics of the Park, especially landscape, biodiversity, world heritage and amenity values, will be avoided, remedied or mitigated.
- (b) To specifically recognise the values associated with the Tongariro National Park and to avoid, remedy or mitigate the risks posed to these areas by inappropriate land use and development and any associated domestic pets, animal pests and pest plants.

RU2.4.3 Explanation of Policy

The policy (and, where applicable, associated rules) is aimed at ensuring that development within the Rural Zone in close proximity to the Tongariro National Park does not detract from the valued characteristics of this area, including Section 6 Matters of National Importance. However, the provisions do not apply to rural activities, which under the associated rules (RU3.2.3) do not require consent.

In general, it is not intended that these provisions will prevent development within this area. Rather, the resource consent process will be used to ensure that any development that does occur does not detract from the landscape, biodiversity, general amenity characteristics and world heritage values of the adjoining Tongariro National Park.



A 500m wide buffer is provided around the Tongariro National Park as it is specifically at risk from, or highly sensitive to, development on its boundary. Within this 500m buffer, specific rules will apply to development. Again, this is not intended to prevent all development, but will ensure that where development does occur it does not adversely impact on this highly significant area.

DOC and other relevant landowners and stakeholders may be considered an affected party.

RU2.5 Issue: Development in Proximity to State Highway 47

- (a) The potential for development in close proximity to State Highway 47 to adversely affect the natural and landscape values associated with Tongariro National Park and National Park Village.

RU2.5.1 Objective

- (a) To ensure any development in close proximity to State Highway 47 maintains and enhances landscape and natural values, especially those associated with Tongariro National Park and National Park Village.

RU2.5.2 Policies

- (a) To permit appropriate comprehensive development in the vicinity of State Highway 47 that promotes the maintenance and enhancement of the quality and amenity values of the rural environment by avoiding, remedying or mitigating the effects:
 - (i) On landscape quality, especially in relation to Tongariro National Park and National Park Village.
 - (ii) Of the cumulative effects on the environment of fragmented and sporadic developments.
 - (iii) On the quality of the environment, including ensuring sewage and stormwater disposal promotes the sustainable management of natural and physical resources; and
 - (iv) Of traffic conflict, including minimising the number of access points to State Highway 47.

RU2.5.3 Explanation of Policies

The land to the north west of State Highway 47 is under pressure from developers wishing to establish residential and tourist accommodation activities. The amenity values and quality of this area is highly valued and closely linked to the Tongariro National Park.

Resource consent applications or plan change requests will be considered on their merit, on a case by case basis, using the policy and assessment criteria (see Rural Rules Chapter) as guidelines. This will require such applications to identify the landscape in which the development is proposed and to assess the effects of the development on that landscape.

RU2.6 Issue: Reverse Sensitivity

- (a) The location of incompatible or sensitive land uses, eg, residential development or visitor accommodation, adjacent to lawfully established activities can adversely affect the operation and viability of existing activities.



RU2.6.1 Objective

- (a) To avoid, remedy or mitigate the potential for lawfully established and/or consented activities to be adversely affected by the introduction of sensitive activities adjacent to them.
- (b) The efficient operation of electricity generation facilities by avoiding the inappropriate siting, layout and design of subdivision and new buildings.
- (c) Ensuring that existing infrastructure corridors are taken into account in all resource management decision-making, and any incompatible use or activity affecting those corridors is avoided, remedied or mitigated.

RU2.6.2 Policy

- (a) To ensure that lawfully established and/or consented activities are not unreasonably compromised by the proximity or design of sensitive neighbouring activities.
- (b) To ensure activities that are potentially sensitive to the adverse external effects of existing lawfully established and/or consented activities in rural areas are appropriately sited, managed or restricted to avoid or mitigate these effects.
- (c) The reverse sensitivity (when servicing the National Grid) effects generated by land development within electricity transmission corridors shall be managed in order to avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects on both the safe, secure and efficient use and development of the transmission network and the safety and amenity values of the community.

RU2.6.3 Explanation of Policies

Reverse sensitivity means the vulnerability of an existing legally established and/or consented activity to challenge from occupants and/or operators of other activities located in the vicinity which are sensitive to adverse environmental effects that may be lawfully generated by the existing activity. This creates the potential for the operation of the existing legally established and/or consented activity to be constrained.

This policy seeks to ensure that the functioning of legally established and/or consented activities that have the potential to generate adverse effects, are not compromised by the inappropriate location or design of sensitive activities such as residential development or visitor accommodation. In particular this policy seeks to:

- (a) Recognise that sensitive activities must take into account the existing surrounding environment when being established.
- (b) Provide protection to existing lawfully established activities that have the potential to generate adverse effects. The Rural Rules specifically provide protection to established factory farms, boarding kennels, the Karioi and Tangiwai Mills, and the High Voltage Transmission Lines.
- (c) Recognise that reverse sensitivity issues may occur in the rural environment.

RU2.7 Issue: Future Urban Area

- (a) Subdivision and land use activities compromising the ability to comprehensively develop land to the east of Ohakune for future urban development.

RU2.7.1 Objective

- (a) Provide for a future urban area that is overlaid on rural zoned land to the east of Ohakune, within which limited interim development can take place and which ensures there are no impediments to efficient, full urban development in the future.



RU2.7.2 Policies

- (a) Ensure that the activities carried out in the rural zone covered by the future urban area overlay do not generate adverse environmental effects and/or compromise efficient future urban development and use.
- (b) Enable the continuation of a range of existing activities providing they avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse environmental effects and do not compromise efficient future urbanisation potential.
- (c) Control the subdivision of land and siting of buildings so that the size, arrangement, access and development of lots will not compromise efficient potential urban development.
- (d) Ensure that any development undertaken in the rural zone within the future urban area overlay does not exacerbate downstream flood risks.
- (e) Enable quality design outcomes which create an overall sense of place with a character that is distinctive but well connected to the existing urban zones of Ohakune Township through the use of Comprehensive Structure Plans for subdivision and development of land within the Future Urban Area Overlay.
- (f) Ensure all Comprehensive Structure Plans consider the surrounding area of which they are a part, and result in outcomes that maintain and enhance the connections between the new and existing urban and surrounding area, where this is also part of the future urban area, and do not undermine the continued development of vacant lots within Ohakune.

RU2.7.3 Explanation of Policies

Council's approach to development in the short to medium term is to consolidate urban development within the existing ex-Residential Medium and High zoned areas of the District before rezoning any additional land to Residential. Specifically with regard to Ohakune, it is recognised that the logical area for the town to extend is to the east, primarily as there are already community facilities (the College and associated facilities, eg, squash courts, tennis courts, gymnasium) within this area and existing patterns of infrastructure lend themselves to accommodating future development.

Interim development within the rural zone covered by the future urban area overlay, including infrastructure provision, has the potential to make further conversion to full urban development difficult if not managed appropriately. While there is current demand for development, particularly smaller lot "rural residential" type opportunities in this area, sporadic interim development can effectively make further conversion to full urban development uneconomic. This is particularly so if development affects or pre-empts the effective and efficient location of roads and a well connected urban street system, services and other supporting land use activities. The type of infrastructure provided, particularly for rural residential or other forms of interim residential development, can have major impacts on further conversion to urban development in future.

The underlying zone of sites within the Future Urban Area Overlay is Rural. However, they are earmarked for future development. At this time Council considers that only limited development should be provided for within this area. It is envisaged that more intensive development will be triggered by a Plan change to re-zone this land, with the appropriate urban zoning to be determined through this process. In the meantime, development will be considered through the resource consent process through the assessment of comprehensive structure plan applications which support future efficient full urban development. For example, in the future urban overlay area bounded by Shannon Street, Ruapehu Road, the railway line and the existing urban area, it is anticipated that an application would be for the entire area and would consider the overall future development of the area, including stormwater management and a connected street system. Where existing urban subdivisions have not been implemented and include cul-de-sac rather than a connected street system, Council acknowledges that there is some public benefit to enabling a more connected street system, through a co-operative approach with adjacent landowners and with Council involvement. Staged subdivisions may be possible within the bounds of an approved comprehensive structure plan, where the staging recognises the range of urban development and



redevelopment opportunities already available and the realistic demand; is consistent with infrastructure provision and there is sufficient information for certainty about the outcomes to be achieved.

The intention of the rules associated with the Future Urban Area Overlay is to restrict the unplanned sprawl of "rural-residential" type lots over this important future development area. This will in turn allow sufficient time for Council to carefully determine the type, nature, style and location of the development considered appropriate for this area, or for appropriate applications that ensure sound urban outcomes.