
C4 RURAL ZONE

Porirua's rural area is a significant resource of outstanding character and beauty. In particular, Pauatahanui Inlet and the surrounding rural land, is of considerable scenic, ecological and recreational value. At the same time it is recognised that some rural land is difficult to farm economically, and the maintenance of the rural area as a scenic resource must be balanced with the landowner's need to provide for their own well-being.

In 1992 the Council with the assistance of consultants carried out a Rural Resources Study. This research identified five significant resource management issues; namely, the land-water interface, protection of the natural environment, rural activities, transportation impacts, and urban expansion.

Rural Activities

The District Plan seeks to allow rural activities while ensuring the rural area remains a sustainable resource for present and future generations. In assessing the most appropriate methods for achieving sustainable management, due regard has been given to the existing pattern of farming, forestry, recreational and residential uses. These issues are identified through the District Plan objectives, policies, rules and activity standards.

Transport Impacts

One of the most significant resource management issues facing the Rural Zone, and the Pauatahanui/Judgeford area in particular, is the proposal to relocate State Highway One along the Transmission Gully Inland Motorway Route, from Linden through to Paekakariki. The impact on the Rural Zone of the proposed Transmission Gully State Highway route in particular, and the transportation network in general, its existing and future population and its environmental values, requires careful consideration.

Transit New Zealand, which is the requiring authority, lodged notices of requirement to designate the Transmission Gully route in April 1996. The decisions of Transit New Zealand on Council's recommendations on the notices of requirement have been appealed to the Environment Court. Therefore the requirements have interim effect only under section 178 of the Resource Management Act until the appeals are resolved. Until such time as these national roading issues have been resolved it would be inappropriate to have policies in this Plan on this matter. However, if during the life of this Plan such a decision is made, the Council will look at the need to implement a plan change.

Protection of the Natural Environment

The purpose of the Resource Management Act 1991 as stated in Section 5, is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. In seeking to satisfy the principles of the RMA, the District Plan will seek to identify, protect and enhance the cultural, historic, scientific and aesthetic resources and values of the Rural Zone.

Section 6 "Matters of National Importance" relating to the protection and enhancement of the natural landscape and cultural heritage is addressed through the objectives and policies of the plan.

Land-water Interface

Activities on land, particularly those near water bodies and the coastal marine area, may have an impact on water quality and ecological values. The extent of control over activities in or near all water bodies or the coastal marine area is therefore an essential matter to be addressed by the District Plan.

Urban Expansion

Future planning must be done in accordance with the principle of the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. This issue therefore requires the balancing of any "need" for urban expansion into the Rural Zone against the need to maintain and enhance environmental values, and to retain the potential for rural land to be used for a variety of rural purposes.

The extent to which subdivision of rural land is permitted and the extent to which any intensity of residential and/or rural residential activity will be allowed, is dealt with specifically throughout the District Plan. The research indicates that there is sufficient land within the existing urban area to accommodate 60-70,000 people (*Source: Porirua City Council Residential Needs and Standards Report, 1991*). No extensions of the urban area into the Rural Zone are therefore proposed in the 10 year life of this District Plan.

Overview

The principal activity in the Rural Zone is pastoral farming. The Rural Zone of Porirua City ranks significantly in this respect within the four cities of the Wellington Region. Rural land comprises 80% of the land area of the City.

Farming in the Rural Zone of Porirua suffers from a generally steep topography, soils of generally low productive value, relatively small holdings, and the pressures of being close to an urban area. A feature of the Rural Zone is the "small holdings" which exist in various locations including Paekakariki Hill Road, Moonshine Road and Murphys Road.

The objectives and policies of the District Plan recognise the need for the Rural Zone to continue as a working rural landscape, and for a wide variety of farm related activities to be allowed in order to maximise both the present viability and future potential of the area.

The natural environment of the Rural Zone encompasses the natural landforms, native vegetation, streams, wetlands and the coast. Some of these areas, particularly the wetland areas and Pauatahanui Inlet, have been recognised as nationally and internationally significant.

The study concluded that the patterns of ownership and the continued use of rural land for rural purposes can significantly contribute to the sustainable management and protection of the natural environment, as well as providing a

livelihood for the rural residents, rural workers, and farmers of both the large and small holdings.

However where specific risks to the natural environment have been identified, policies and rules have been developed. For example, controls will be placed on earthworks to ensure protection of the natural landforms and protection of the coastal waters from siltation. Controls on the removal of native vegetation are also necessary to ensure that particularly significant areas of native vegetation are protected.

Council may require applicants to supply evidence of consultation with the tangata whenua. Council will notify the tangata whenua of all notified resource consent applications received. The tangata whenua will be consulted at an early stage for all resource consent applications. The local iwi will therefore have an important role to play in the environmental management of the Rural Area. In particular, comment will be actively sought on activities which may impact on Maori spiritual values. Any representations received will form an integral part of any resource management decisions which are made. Section C5 "Responding To The Treaty Of Waitangi" should be referred to for a full explanation of the tangata whenua's role and rights with respect to the RMA and environmental management.

The riparian strip etc. provisions set out later in the Plan (see Sections C9 "Landscape and Ecology" and C10 "Coastal Issues") are designed to further enhance the protection of the streams, rivers and coastal environment and the adjacent rural environment where this is at risk.

The study identified subdivision for residential purposes and urban expansion into the Rural Zone as one of the main threats to the present character and future sustainable management of the rural environment. The Wellington Regional Policy Statement clearly encourages local authorities to contain urban sprawl in order to maximise the efficiency of the urban area and reduce the depletion of the natural and physical resources of the Rural Zone. This section of the Plan has therefore addressed this issue in line with policy. It should be noted that rural smallholdings are not necessarily an example of sprawl and in fact they can, in locations adjacent to the existing urban area, perform a buffering function preventing urban sprawl onto rural zoned land.

Pauatahanui Village is a little rural settlement adjacent to Pauatahanui Inlet and located in the eastern part of the Rural Zone. It comprises a total of 14 dwellings, some of which are of historical and architectural merit (refer to Part J of the Plan which contains a Heritage Register of significant buildings and sites etc.), which are located in the vicinity of a school, shop, service station, church, a cottage craft shop, cafe/restaurant, and a saddlery.

The Village has a unique character and has become over time the social and commercial centre for the residents in the vicinity of the Village. Without strict controls on subdivision of further certificates of title and building development, the character of the village could be significantly altered. Furthermore, the Zone is not served by a stormwater and a reticulated sewerage system. Therefore increased levels of effluent disposal via septic tanks could have a detrimental effect on the coastal marine area at the head of the Pauatahanui Inlet. The Plan does not provide for increased urban development at Pauatahanui in the next ten years.

Over the years considerable fragmentation has taken place around the Pauatahanui Inlet. To the north subdivision has resulted in a number of smallholdings, such as around Motukaraka Point. The resulting pattern is clusters of housing, extensive landscaping about them and remnants of native vegetation. Where closer development occurs, usually close to the lower slopes adjacent to the Inlet, plantings have increased which has enriched the landscape and provided better erosion control than extensive pastoral areas.

Following public consultation, and with considerable community support, it has been decided to contain the urban area within the land previously zoned for urban activities. In addition, subdivision controls have been established which will require an appropriate consent process referring both to the need to prevent urbanisation while recognising that development of smallholdings in appropriate locations can contribute both to the rural sector and district economy, and can contribute to the landscape. Any alteration in policy to allow for urban residential development on rural land would require a plan change to address the needs of any proposed residential areas. The creation of allotments of less than 5 hectares is generally likely to limit the range of primary production activities for which the land could be used, create demands for the Council to provide costly and uneconomic public services, and result in a loss of rural character. Such areas might cover a well defined village location, e.g. Pauatahanui, or an extension of the urban area adjacent to Plimmerton or on the rolling hillsides overlooking the Taupo Swamp. A plan change of this nature could only be justified if it was necessary to accommodate a further 10,000 to 20,000 people in Porirua City over and above an urban population of 70,000 people; a demand not foreseen in the next 20 years.

C4.1 OBJECTIVE

TO IDENTIFY A RURAL ZONE AND CONTINUE ITS MANAGEMENT SO AS TO AVOID, REMEDY OR MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF THE ACTIVITIES WITHIN IT.

Explanation

The Rural Zone comprises both the natural environment and the rural activities conducted on the land. Accordingly, it is physically and visually distinct from the urban areas of Porirua. This objective allows the continued use and management of the Rural Zone for rural purposes in a sustainable manner.

In order for the Rural Zone to continue to function efficiently, rural activities must not be compromised by other activities, or by controls which preclude reasonable land use. The Council shall therefore ensure any adverse effects on the environment from activities in the Rural Zone are minimised. For a variety of reasons, the Rural Zone is likely to remain non-urban for the foreseeable future. Specifically these relate to the lack of any perceived need for more urban land, protection of the ecological and visual character, and the wish to limit the uneconomic extension of services.

C4.1.1 Policy

To preserve the contrast between the rural and urban areas of Porirua City.Explanation

This policy defines a distinct Rural Zone within Porirua City to provide a framework in which limits can be placed on the range of activities within that zone, and where such activities are conducted in a manner that is sustainable in resource management terms. The extent of the Rural Zone shown on the Planning Maps, excluding roads and publicly owned reserves is 12,000 hectares.

Method of Implementation

The Rural Zone as shown on the **Planning maps** has been established as the extent to which the majority of the Rural Zone Rules and Standards apply (see Section D4).

Principal Reasons

A large proportion of the land area of Porirua City is rural and, accordingly has been zoned rural. Activity standards apply to all activities in this zone to ensure the protection of the rural character, permit the continuation of rural practices, and encourage a wider range of activities.

C4.1.2 Policy

To encourage primary production activities in the Rural Zone.Explanation

This policy will facilitate the full and active use of rural land for productive purposes such as agriculture, horticulture and forestry etc., where such activities are conducted in a manner that is consistent with the principle of sustainable management.

Method of Implementation

The Rural Zone as shown on the **Planning maps** has been established as the extent to which the majority of the Rural Zone Rules and Standards apply (see Section D4).

District Plan rules allow for primary production activities as permitted activities provided they do not exceed permitted activity standards in D4.2.1. Activities other than primary production activities (see the definition in Part M) are discretionary activities and will require a resource consent.

The harvesting phase of forestry operations has the potential, if not carefully managed, to cause significant adverse environmental effects. The harvesting of production forestry above 1 hectare in size will therefore be a controlled activity and the Council will reserve its discretion over the extraction method, the time at which harvesting will take place, and the proposed route for

accessing and removal of the timber. The developer may also be liable to financial contributions in accordance with Part E of the Plan.

Principal Reasons

It is important to recognise and allow for a variety of rural activities in the Rural Zone as landowners wish to take advantage of changes in local and international markets. However it is also important to ensure that rural activities do not detract from the rural character and ecological values of the Rural Zone, or adversely affect the existing infrastructure. Rules and standards have therefore been set at levels which allow a variety of rural activities to operate provided they do not result in significant adverse environmental effects.

C4.1.3 Policy

To ensure that activities within the Rural Zone do not detract from the character or quality of the rural environment.

Explanation

This policy recognises that there are some activities in the Rural Zone which are complementary to the activities involved in utilising the fertility of the soil for productive purposes.

Method of Implementation

District Plan rules allow for non-primary production activities as discretionary activities and will require a resource consent application. This category of resource consent allows the Council to either refuse the application, or impose conditions in order to avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse environmental effects.

Temporary military training activities can vary considerably in their scale, nature and intensity. There is also considerable scope for variation in the nature of the effects from different types of temporary military activities. Provision is made in the Plan for certain temporary military training activities as permitted activities where temporary military activities standards can be met; where the standards cannot be met temporary military training activities are provided for as controlled activities, and discretionary activities in landscape protection areas. In considering consent applications the matters over which Council has reserved control are:

- Any restrictions on access to recreational areas.
- Likely land degradation by vehicles including tracked vehicles and the need for land reinstatement.
- Impact upon watercourses and riparian margins and wetlands, historic sites, sites of significance to tangata whenua, and native vegetation.
- Number of personnel.
- Duration of consent.

- Impact on rural roads.

This will enable Council to impose conditions to mitigate any actual or potential adverse effects.

Principal Reasons

This policy recognises that the principal activities in the Rural Zone are those involved in the use of the land for productive purposes. There are also activities of a "non-productive" nature that are sometimes a necessary and complementary component of primary production activities. However, in assessing the relative merits of an application, the Council will require proof that a particular activity requires a rural location. The Council will need to be satisfied that an alternative urban site is not available or suitable, and that the activity is more appropriately located in the Rural Zone. This policy is designed to ensure that there are significant restrictions on the type of activities which the Council will allow in the Rural Zone, and only those that serve a legitimate rural purpose or cannot readily be accommodated in the urban zones will be permitted.

In determining the suitability of an activity regard shall be had to its size and scale. The significant loss of land for productive purposes shall be discouraged, and activities will be directed onto land of low productive value.

Applications for a resource consent will require an assessment of environmental effects to ensure that the proposed activity is able to be accommodated without adversely impacting on the character of the rural environment, and that all adverse environmental effects such as traffic and roading, sewage and stormwater disposal, noise etc. are mitigated.

Proposals involving discharges to land, air and water may require a resource consent from the Wellington Regional Council.

The Rural Zone also comprises a range of recreational resources, such as reserves which are developed for a range of active and passive recreational activities. The coastal margins and Pauatahanui Inlet also form an important recreational resource, with associated amenities for the use of the public.

A wide range of temporary activities e.g. sporting events, fairs, music festivals, also occur on an intermittent basis in the Rural Zone, and due to the nature of the activity will generally fall into the discretionary activity category. These activities can contribute significantly to the health and vitality of the city as a whole. However, if such activities are not managed carefully they can cause significant short-term traffic, parking and noise problems etc. For this reason, each event which requires a resource consent will be carefully considered.

Other temporary activities such as military training exercises vary considerably in their scale, nature and intensity. There are some temporary military training activities which are of a nature and scale that conditions can be imposed on them to avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effects that may arise. Such activities are provided for as permitted activities. The Plan also recognises that the nature of temporary military training activities is such that there is potential for a wide range of effects, in particular through noise, the impact of tracked vehicles, impacts on watercourses and wetlands, and impacts on rural roads.

Such activities will require an application for a resource consent as a controlled activity, and discretionary activity in the landscape protection area. Council will be able to refuse the application for a discretionary activity, or impose conditions in order to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse environmental effects. Noise standards that recognise the nature of temporary military training have been imposed.

C4.1.4 Policy

To allow extractive industries where they will not significantly deplete the productive potential of the land or the visual, amenity or ecological, cultural or Maori spiritual values of the land and/or the water.

Explanation

This policy recognises that mining, quarrying and topsoil mining can be accepted as being consistent with sustainable management in parts of the Rural Zone provided the activities can meet minimum environmental standards.

Method of Implementation

Extractive industries are listed as a discretionary activity in the Rural Zone. The only exceptions will be small-scale activities undertaken as part of a primary production activity which meet all permitted activity standards. Earthworks must also meet the requirements of the Council's **earthworks bylaw**.

Principal Reasons

Extractive activities need not greatly reduce the potential of the land, but can, if appropriately managed, enhance the sustainability of rural activity. That is, integrated management plans for the rehabilitation of land which has been worked may, in the medium to long term, enhance the productive use of the land. Extractive industries can also provide employment and business opportunities to the rural community. This is an important resource management issue and one which will be taken into consideration in assessing the relative merits of a resource consent application.

In assessing an application for an extractive industry the Council will consider the effect of such an activity on the City's natural and physical resources, namely, the effects on soil and water, and the road network and other infrastructure.

Porirua City has over recent years become more popular as a location for topsoil mining for the purposes of providing topsoil for a range of domestic and commercial purposes. This is accepted as a legitimate rural activity, but it is important to closely manage and monitor the effects of such activities on the environment, particularly with respect to soil and water run-off. In some locations due to soil types and slope it may not be appropriate to allow such activities. Applicants for a resource consent will be required to submit details of their proposals and a full assessment of the likely effects.

C4.1.5 Policy

To only allow offensive trades where they require a rural location and which cannot be accommodated within the Industrial Zone.

Explanation

The Council will need proof, on a case by case basis, that a particular offensive trade needs to be located in the Rural Zone.

Method of Implementation

District Plan rules require that offensive trades are a non-complying activity in the Rural Zone. This category of resource consent application is designed to discourage such activities in the Rural Zone, but allows the applicant the opportunity to present a case to the Council, and the Council to assess each application on its merits. Where relevant industry standards exist, these will provide a key method of guidance in the consideration of resource consent applications.

In submitting a resource consent application the applicant will be required to undertake a full assessment of environmental effects in accordance with the information requirements of Part F Information to Be Supplied.

The second category of activity which present a possible risk to the community are those activities involving the use of hazardous substances. This matter has been dealt with in Section C15 Hazardous Substances.

Principal Reasons

Offensive trades have the potential to cause significant adverse environmental effects if not appropriately managed. Although it is largely dependent on the scale of the activity, industries of this nature can create significant demands on the infrastructure. Heavy industry usually has high water and electricity usage, and produces significant levels of wastewater and stormwater run-off. The Industrial Zone has been designed to accommodate this level of infrastructural demand. Accordingly, it is recognised that the Industrial Zone is generally the more appropriate location for offensive trades.

However, it is also recognised that in some instances due to the location of particular markets or suppliers, or to particular locational attributes that it may be appropriate that such an industry needs to have a rural location.

The rural area is sensitive to environmental change and the effects of 'urban development'. This is due, in part, to the absence of urban infrastructural systems designed to manage heavy industry. In assessing the relative merits of an application the Council shall have regard to the impact of the development on sensitive ecological areas, such as the coast and aquatic habitats, and on Maori spiritual values associated with certain land and water resources.

The onus will therefore be on the applicant to prove to the Council that a particular rural site is needed for the location of such an industrial activity, and that any adverse environmental effects can be either mitigated, avoided or remedied.

C4.1.6 Policy

To ensure that non-primary production activities do not make it necessary to upgrade rural roads beyond the level needed to service rural and recreational activities.

Explanation

There is a network of rural roads which are suitable for the relatively low levels of traffic associated with rural activities and recreational activities in the rural zone. The Council does not propose to upgrade rural roads beyond what is necessary to ensure the existing standard and carrying capacity of roading is maintained.

Method of Implementation

District Plan rules require that any development resulting in a new access point or an increased level of activity will be considered as a discretionary activity resource consent. Private developers will be required to meet the full cost of road upgrading required as part of a resource consent. Refer to Part E Financial Contributions of this Plan, and specifically Section E2 "Roads and Access".

Other programmes for roading improvement may be addressed through the Council's **annual planning process**.

Principal Reasons

Programmes for roading improvements will be focused on the provision of services to the Rural Zone appropriate to the rural and recreational activities in that area. Roads will not be upgraded to promote a higher intensity of land use. This is to ensure the rural character is retained. Activities adjacent to roads will be managed to protect traffic safety, and avoid unnecessary demands for road upgrading.

Upgrading rural roads to a high standard would be expensive and would place an undue financial imposition on the community. Where private developers seek to locate outside the urban zones, a condition of any consent will be to require that they meet the costs of any road upgrading. Where the proposal would also result in a significant increase in the ongoing cost of maintaining the road, over and above what would be required for rural or recreational activities, this would also be a factor which would be taken into account in the decision on the resource consent application.

C4.1.7 Policy

To allow the minor adjustment of title boundaries in the Rural Zone.

Explanation

This policy facilitates the rationalisation of existing title boundaries for the purposes of creating more practical title boundaries.

Method of Implementation

The **District Plan rules** on subdivision allow boundary adjustments as a controlled activity. This category of resource consent cannot be refused but allows Council the discretion to impose conditions on such matters as access, the location of new boundaries, and the provision of services etc.

Principal Reasons

Boundary adjustments are subdivisions which do not encourage the intensification of the use of land or significantly alter the configuration and the number of titles, and consequently do not lead to a change in the character and use of the land.

The original pattern of subdivision is not always sympathetic to contours, ground conditions and access. In the interests of improved pastoral and forestry production, and better utilisation of productive land and existing dwelling sites, some rearrangement of certificates of title may be desirable and necessary to promote good farm management. In addition, it may be appropriate to rearrange titles to suit the needs of different users and activities in the Rural Zone.

C4.1.8 Policy

To protect the long term potential of the rural land resource by ensuring that the new allotments for which a certificate of title can be issued are capable of accommodating a range of primary production activities.

Explanation

It is important to allow for a variety of allotments to be created provided they do not encourage a pattern of land ownership and subsequent use of the land which would compromise the long term sustainable management of the rural resource. The Council shall therefore not permit the creation of allotments which are not able to accommodate a range of primary production activities.

Method of Implementation

- (a) Under Rule D4.1.5 the creation of new allotments below 5 hectares is a non-complying activity.
- (b) The creation of **new allotments 5 hectares or more but under 40 hectares will be a discretionary activity** and a resource consent will be required. These subdivision applications would be required to meet minimum standards relating to access, servicing, earthworks, etc. As a discretionary activity the full range of issues relating to an application will be considered on a case by case basis before any decision is made on whether to grant or decline the application. The Council may also impose conditions, including conditions relating to financial contributions, to any resource consent which it grants.
- (c) The creation of large **allotments of 40 hectares or more are a controlled activity**. Controlled activities cannot be refused. This will

give certainty to rural landowners, whilst ensuring an assessment of environmental effects relating to specified matters is undertaken.

Principal Reasons

District Plan policies play an important role in contributing to the continued productivity of the rural area. Rules allowing for a variety of allotment sizes to be created help promote a variety of land uses and activities. This is a sustainable use of the rural resource. The changing nature of farming is such that the District Plan must allow flexibility for a variety of land holdings and associated primary production activities. To meet this demand the Plan allows for larger holdings to be subdivided where this would result in continued sustainable management of the land.

Allotments of Less than 5 Hectares.

The Council, and its predecessor the Hutt County Council, have long recognised the important relationship between land fragmentation and the potential adverse effects of unsustainable land use.

There are a significant number of small allotments in the rural area. Many of these were created prior to the time when the Territorial Authority was able to exercise effective control over subdivision. Collectively, however, these allotments account for only a small proportion of the total land area of the Rural Zone. The majority of the Rural Zone is in allotments of a size generally suitable for a range of primary production activities.

The creation of allotments of less than 5 hectares is generally likely to limit the range of primary production activities for which the land could be used, create demands for the Council to provide costly and uneconomic public services, and result in a loss of rural character. There are some places, however, such as locations on the north side of the Pauatahanui Inlet, in the vicinity of areas where closer subdivision has occurred already, where that general limitation may be less applicable.

Allotments between 5 Hectares or more and less than 40 Hectares.

The need to provide a variety of allotment sizes must however be balanced against the possibility of creating allotments which due to location and access etc. may not be able to accommodate a range of rural activities and therefore are likely to lead to a long term loss of sustainability in the rural resource.

Five hectares has been determined as the minimum allotment size able to be created as a discretionary activity in the Rural Zone. It is envisaged that the majority of allotments created in the rural area will need to be considerably greater than five hectares in order to ensure the potential for a range of primary production activities. The creation of allotments near the lower end of the scale will need to be accompanied by evidence that these allotments could accommodate a range of primary production activities in order to comply with this policy.

Allotments of 40 hectares or greater.

Allotments of this size ensure a continued low density of development and facilitates the preservation of the natural character of the Rural Zone. Rules have been included in the Plan relating to controls on earthworks, the protection of native vegetation and subdivision controls relating to access, servicing etc. which ensure the natural character is retained.

Large allotments of this size provide for the management of primary productive activities, and generally do not result in demands for the provision of services and infrastructure, or have significant adverse environmental impacts.

C4.2**OBJECTIVE****TO AVOID OR REDUCE THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF ACTIVITIES ON ECOSYSTEMS AND THE CHARACTER OF THE RURAL ZONE.**Explanation

The Rural Zone contains many valued natural features and ecosystems in private and public ownership, which contribute significantly to its ecological diversity and visual attraction. It is important therefore to have due regard to any possible adverse effects of activities on the City's rural resources.

Parts of the Rural Zone have been the subject of incremental subdivision into smaller parcels. This has occurred in response to changing methods and forms of primary production, and in response to a demand for a rural residential lifestyle. In some instances, few examples of the particular remnant features remain and they are frequently vulnerable to destruction by land development, e.g. land drainage, bush clearance. However, the public acquisition of much of this land for future reserves is not generally feasible.

The areas of native vegetation, the streams, and the natural character of the coast all require careful management in order to promote the sustainable management of the resources of Porirua City as a whole. This objective and subsequent policies, rules and standards seek to ensure that the intrinsic values of the rural landscape are protected, and that any development in the Rural Zone does not have an adverse impact on the Landscape Protection Areas, the coastal areas, waterways, or other environmentally sensitive areas.

In recognising the value of significant areas which define the form of the City and its landscape character, the District Plan has mapped a number of Landscape Protection Areas, and policies have been included relating to the protection of the rural landscape as a whole. These Areas are further explained in Section C9 "Landscape and Ecology" of the Plan.

C4.2.1**Policy****To manage the environmental effects of buildings on the rural resource.**Explanation

This policy deals with managing the environmental effects caused by dwellings and other buildings throughout the Rural Zone.

Method of Implementation

District Plan rules specify that the initial dwelling on a certificate of title and accessory buildings, (except in a Landscape Protection Area), are controlled activities. The Plan specifies activity standards for activities in this Area which are to be met for all proposed buildings. All dwellings in a Landscape Protection Area, will be subject to a discretionary activity resource consent application.

This policy seeks to ensure that future houses are sited in locations which have the least effects on the functioning and amenity values of the rural resource, and establishes a control on the establishment of more than one dwelling on a landholding.

This includes consideration of the following aspects:

- (a) An adequate area for drainage purposes;
- (b) A safe and stable building platform;
- (c) The provision of on-site parking of vehicles;
- (d) Safe and suitable vehicle access;
- (e) Earthworks for the provision of building platforms and accessways and the impact of these works on the natural environment;
- (f) The avoidance of the removal of native vegetation
- (g) The effect on landscapes identified in the Plan as Landscape Protection Areas.
- (h) The impact on any heritage feature as listed in the Heritage Register in Part J of the Plan.
- (i) Any adverse effects from natural hazards.

Principal Reasons

The rural resource is to be managed for the promotion of rural activities and the protection of the natural environment. Dwellings and other buildings are important to the continued use and functioning of the Rural Zone. They do however have many potential adverse effects, including reducing the character of the rural landscape, increasing usage and deterioration of public roads, increasing demands for water supply, electricity, sewerage, and urban facilities and services.

C4.2.2 Policy

To protect the natural and physical environment from silt run-off caused by the removal of native vegetation and earthworks and disturbances to the land.

Explanation

This policy seeks to control the adverse environmental effects of silt run-off from development involving earthworks and the removal of native vegetation. While primary responsibility for discharges rests with the Regional Council, the District Plan also serves a purpose in managing those activities likely to cause run-off.

Method of Implementation

This policy will be achieved through **District Plan rules and activity standards** relating to limits on earthworks and the removal of native vegetation. New dwellings and road crossings require a resource consent at which time conditions may be imposed on such matters as, the siting of the building and the creation of an access to it, the amount and timing of earthworks, site development works and the protection of areas susceptible to erosion etc. Rules and Council advocacy policies relating to the provision of riparian strips have also been included in sections C9 and C10.

The **Wellington Regional Council** may from time to time also undertake maintenance, flood and erosion mitigation work or capital works as appropriate.

This Council also has a limited role to play but may undertake some works at a localised level with respect to stormwater piping and drain clearance and recontouring. Funding priorities may be identified in the **annual planning process**.

Earthworks must also meet the requirements of Council's **earthworks bylaw**.

Principal Reasons

Silt run off from earthworks including roading, track cutting and topsoil mining can cause the pollution and cumulative siltation of shallow marine environments such as the Pauatahanui Inlet.

Slope failure and washouts across roads etc., caused by the undermining of hillsides by farm tracks or access strips, can result in significant levels of silt being washed into adjacent waterways, a disruption to rural activities, a detraction from the visual quality of the rural environment, and a loss of productive rural land.

The loss of significant areas of vegetation in areas prone to erosion can substantially increase the levels of silt entering nearby streams and waterways. Controls on the clearance of such land also serve the purpose of maintaining the visual character, and protecting ecologically significant areas from deterioration or destruction.

Riparian strips along the margins of rivers and the coastline, are important mechanisms in helping to protect water bodies from contaminants. This land,

which is generally held in public ownership, provides a buffer zone for the protection of the particular water body from urban activity, acts as a filtering system for the overland and underground flow of water and contaminants, and provide an important visual and recreation resource. Objectives and policies for the provision of these protective margins are included in Sections C9 "Landscape and Ecology" and C10 "Coastal Issues".

C4.2.3 Policy

To require a high standard of wastewater disposal at all times.

Explanation

This policy reflects the importance of controlling wastewater run-off from the land into waterways, wetlands and the coast. While the primary responsibility for discharges rests with the Regional Council, the District Plan also serves a purpose in managing those activities likely to cause any degradation of water quality.

Method of Implementation

District Plan rules and activity standards specify that residential dwellings in the Rural Zone require a resource consent. The applicant will therefore be required to provide information on wastewater disposal to the satisfaction of Council.

The Wellington Regional Council also requires compliance with minimum standards of wastewater disposal as set out in the "**Discharges to Land**" Plan.

Principal Reasons

This policy is necessary to avoid the cumulative adverse effects of wastewater and low quality sewage treatment which can occur with an increasing intensity of land use development. Inappropriate methods and levels of wastewater disposal have the potential to adversely affect the natural and physical environment, including waterways and their ecology, groundwater supplies for domestic purposes, and the cultural and spiritual values of the Tangata Whenua.

C4.2.4 Policy

To encourage the maintenance and enhancement of the ecological integrity and natural character of the Rural Zone.

Explanation

Although modified, the Rural Zone has a strong natural character. The natural character of the Rural Zone is derived from a combination of ridgelines, open spaces, rivers and streams, wetlands, coastal landforms, and native and exotic flora and fauna. Ecosystems and ecological processes are an integral part of natural character. Ecological integrity and rural character contributes to the community's sense of identity, health and wellbeing, and should therefore be protected for present and future generations.

Method of Implementation

District Plan policies (see Section C9), **rules and the Planning Maps** identify certain areas of the Rural Zone as being Landscape Protection Areas. The policies recognise the particular landscape merits of these areas so that due regard may be given to them when assessing the merits of a resource consent application.

Other rules and standards which relate to the retention of the rural character include the retention of the existing rural/urban boundary and the containment of urban sprawl. Allied to this, the Plan restricts the creation of certificates of title below 5 hectares. The creation of such a title is a non-complying activity. This will help retain a rural pattern of activities and a rural character. There are also restrictions on the construction of dwellings and farm buildings etc.

The Council will encourage the voluntary protection of significant natural features outside the Landscape Protection Areas, which are not subject to a resource consent application. **Voluntary covenanting and management** is the preferred means of achieving long-term protection of these features.

Principal Reasons

The natural and physical character of the Rural Zone is to be retained to achieve the purposes of the Act and its principles expressed in Sections 7(c) and (f) of the Resource Management Act 1991.

The natural character of the City's Rural Zone has changed considerably over the decades through land clearance, rural activities, roading and built structures etc. Several of these significant landscapes and ecosystems are in public ownership and therefore protected through various statutory mechanisms. Many more however remain in private ownership. Conservation of these features can contribute significantly to the City's ecological, cultural, and landscape resources, and therefore the community's wellbeing. This can be achieved without unduly restricting the owners use of the land.

Council is aware of the positive attitudes of landowners towards the retention of natural features, native vegetation, landscapes and ecosystems, but recognises this should be reinforced by the Plan so as to achieve its conservation objectives.

While there is considerable knowledge of existing stands of native vegetation it is not considered necessary to map these as part of the District Plan. This information will be made available on request.

C4.3 ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES ANTICIPATED

The following environmental outcomes are anticipated:

- C4.3.1 The retention of the existing visual and land-use distinction between the rural and urban areas.
- C4.3.2 The protection of the natural and physical character of the rural environment.

- C4.3.3 To enable landowners to continue the sustainable management of the rural resource whilst encouraging a range of rural activities.
- C4.3.4 The identification and conservation of ecologically sensitive habitats, significant landscape areas and sites of cultural significance to the Tangata Whenua.
- C4.3.5 Opportunities for people to live and work in the Rural Zones without jeopardising existing land use patterns, sensitive ecological and landscape areas, the rural character, and water quality, or services provided by the community.
- C4.3.6 An efficient and effective rural roading network which is environmentally sensitive to the lower intensity of traffic from rural levels of activity envisaged in the Plan.