

PART 1 FRANKLIN DISTRICT

1.1 RESOURCES

Franklin is largely a rural District. Good land, soil and water resources have made the District well known for farming and horticulture. Most of the settlements and communities within Franklin were founded on these activities. For example, the Pukekohe area has some of the most productive soils in New Zealand and has long been associated with market gardening. The District also has areas of poorer quality land.

Local economies, employment and the social makeup of Franklin rely upon the good management of the District's resources such as soils, water, and minerals. But increasingly there is competition for resources, and the threat of damage to them.

Franklin is close to Auckland - a major market and employment centre. Producer industries, residents and increasingly tourists want to take advantage of this closeness and of Franklin's rich natural resources and clean rural environment.

1.2 POPULATION

There has been a significant population increase in the District in recent years. The population increased by 45.7 per cent between 1991 and 2006 to 60,900 (Census). If this rate continues then the population in 2021 is predicted to be 82,206; and 117,366 in the year 2051. This would have major resource implications, the nature and degree of these implications depending on how the population increase was distributed.

Much of the recent increase has been in the rural areas, and the traditional population mix of Franklin is changing. Particularly in parts of northern Franklin, long established farming families are now outnumbered by new residents. There is a growing conflict between the expectations of these new rural residents and traditional farming activities.

1.3 URBAN AREAS

Growth in the main urban areas of Pukekohe, Tuakau, and Waiuku has been steady in recent years. Other village centres such as Patumahoe and Clarks Beach have seen greater percentage increases. The urban areas provide a full range of services and facilities, and in general the public infrastructure can accommodate the immediate growth expectations in these areas. However the extension of the Southern motorway has made some parts of Franklin even more accessible, and this, coupled with the positive effects of economic growth, gives rise to a need for well defined urban growth strategies, and managed growth in appropriate locations.

Each of Franklin's smaller rural and coastal settlements has a unique and special character. Some are facing pressure to expand and many face servicing problems which will need to be resolved before further development can take place. This has implications for settlement character and lifestyle.

1.4 NATURAL CHARACTER

Franklin has a distinctive natural character. Its rich and varied landscape comprises a variety of land forms, bodies of water and vegetation. The lower reaches of the Waikato River and its wetlands are a nationally important wildlife habitat and have immense cultural and spiritual value to local Maori. The Hunua Ranges are one of the two most extensive areas of native forest in the Auckland Region.

Historically, human habitation has resulted in most of the natural landscape being modified. Notably, large areas of native forest were cleared to make way for pastoral farming. Today, the effects of development are further modifying, and in some cases destroying valued aspects of the District's landscape.

The District is bounded by extensive coastlines on the Tasman Sea, Manukau Harbour and Firth of Thames. The Karaka and Miranda foreshores are internationally important habitats for birds. These and other coastal areas face significant development pressure. If the natural character of Franklin's coastline is to be preserved and important habitats protected, the effects of development need to be carefully managed.

1.5 CULTURAL HERITAGE

Franklin's Cultural heritage is important to the identity of the communities and individuals who occupy the District. The cultural heritage resource of the District includes: sites, places, areas, waahi tapu, waahi tapu areas, buildings, objects, artifacts, natural features of cultural and historical significance, historical and cultural associations, people, agencies and institutions.

1.6 SUMMARY

In summary, Franklin is a resource rich District with outstanding natural character. Significant increases in population and development, particularly in the rural areas, could adversely affect the natural and physical resources and the amenity values of the District.