

**PART 16 RURAL AND COASTAL ISSUES****16.1 INTRODUCTION TO ISSUES****State of Environment**

The Franklin District is a rural district. The District contains large areas where rural activities are undertaken and landscapes with resultant open space and a particular rural character and amenity. It is an area where there are many remaining sites and associations of importance to tangata whenua.

It is however a considerably varied environment with extensive areas of developed pasture, cropping and other agricultural land, the forestlands of the Hunua Ranges, the rugged hill lands of the Port Waikato and northern Waikato area and the distinctive coastal environments of the Manukau Harbour, Tasman Coast and eastern Seabird Coast.

This environment is inter-dispersed with a variety of towns and villages as well as countryside living, particularly in the northern parts of the District closer to the Auckland metropolitan area and motorway network. A central issue is how growth is managed to address adverse effects on the environment while sustaining existing towns and villages, and rural and coastal character and amenity.

The District contains a number of significant natural and cultural features and environments, which contribute to its biodiversity, natural beauty and character. This includes extensive areas of natural indigenous vegetation, wetlands and varied coastal environments as well as smaller remnant patches of vegetation and wetland. The landscapes outside the significant areas of vegetation have been extensively modified by human activity. In the northern part of the District, closer to Auckland, there is little indigenous or riparian vegetation remaining. A number of areas of indigenous bush and wetland remnants have been protected in the past through incentive methods. However, these are limited in their ability to re-establish biodiversity and have contributed to an ad-hoc dispersal of countryside living in the rural and coastal areas. Riparian vegetation has been lost from stream margins.

An issue to address is how such features and habitats, in particular how the more significant features and habitats are protected, maintained or enhanced.

There are also a number of natural processes that impact on the natural and physical environment, in particular those associated with the coastal edge such as erosion and inundation.

The coastal environment, its visual amenity and landscapes, are also sensitive to change from activities such as residential development. The village environment can also be affected by the scale and intensity of development to an extent which detracts from its particular village character.

Therefore, there is a need to include measures that recognise the effects of natural processes in relation to risk to property and human life as well as adverse changes to the environmental values of the coastal areas.

Within rural and coastal areas a wide range of rural activities, including farming and rural production activities, forestry and mineral extraction, occur and contribute to the well being of the District. Major industries include the New Zealand Steel Mill at Glenbrook and mineral extraction sites.

There are also further resource use issues that have arisen out of historic land management practices, the use of finite resources such as soils and water, as well as those relating to the functioning of communities and services, and the best use of the resources that are available to the District.

Areas of valued rural production land have been greatly fragmented by subdivision, in particular in the northern part of the District. A significant number of lots were created between the 1970s and 1990s, and these lots have provided a source of countryside living, particularly in the northern part of the District where, given the proximity to Auckland, the demand is greatest.

In this area many lots are still vacant with the right to erect dwellings. However, it is evident that given both the level of demand driven by proximity to Auckland and a shortage of alternative living options, the full use of these sites to establish dwellings may adversely affect the future use of the land for productive activities,

rural character and amenity values, and create conflict between activities. Encouragement needs to be given to redistributing these vacant existing rural lots to less versatile land where such development can be appropriately managed.

The District also contains significant mineral resources, which will come under increasing demand as a result of the District's close proximity to metropolitan Auckland and a decrease in availability of sources elsewhere in the region. There is, therefore, a need to protect the environment and community from the effects of extracting such resources while providing continued access.

The central issue is ensuring that sustainable opportunities are provided to accommodate the District's continuing growth, while managing its natural and physical environment. This includes the need to provide for the wide range of established activities that rely on the resources of the District, encouraging continuance and enhancement of its rural and coastal character, and natural environmental values, while ensuring growth is appropriately provided for.

A hierarchical approach to growth management provides for the greatest proportion of growth being located in the main towns of Pukekohe, Waiuku and Tuakau, and key villages (Clarks Beach, Kingseat, Pokeno, Buckland, Patumahoe), a lesser proportion within other villages and only a limited opportunity for growth in the rural areas.

The smaller villages provide for an 'urban form' of community where they can readily serve the wider surrounding rural communities. The extension and consolidation of existing villages is likely to result in a more effective support for existing services and local economies. These villages provide an appropriate focus for residential choice. They can also provide a substitute for countryside living through larger lots within the periphery of the village. It is appropriate to build upon and provide additional capacity in existing villages. Where there is a capacity shortfall in villages, such as in the Karaka, Karaka South and Te Hihi areas, it is desirable to promote additional village capacity around existing nodes. Such an approach will assist to reduce use of the dispersed vacant lots in rural locations for countryside living activities.

Growth in rural areas outside these locations is the lowest priority in the hierarchy.

Limited countryside living opportunities are provided through a defined rural countryside living zone located in the Runciman area. This provides an alternative to un-constrained dispersed rural countryside living development throughout the District. Limited opportunities for rural subdivision are also provided within the northern part of the District where demand is highest but only where significant environmental enhancement is achieved, effects on rural and coastal character are addressed and a redistribution or reduction of existing dispersed vacant lots is encouraged. More limited subdivision opportunities are provided outside of the northern part of the District where significant environmental protection and enhancement is achieved and where the proliferation and dispersal of lots is avoided. This strategy is consistent with the Auckland Regional Growth Strategy 2050, the Auckland Regional Policy Statement and the Franklin District Growth Strategy 2007.

### Issues Structure

The key rural and coastal issues facing Franklin District are detailed under the following headings:

- Managing growth in rural and coastal areas
  - Strategic and District Context
  - District Growth Strategy
  - Regional Context
  - Capacity and Latent Potential
- Living in Rural and Coastal Areas
  - Existing Communities and Settlements
  - Villages
  - Conflicts in the Coastal and Rural Areas – Matters of Reverse Sensitivity and Rural Character

- Sustainability of Natural Resources:
  - Maintenance of the rural production system
  - Versatile land and fragmentation
  - Degraded water quality and riparian habitat
  - Accessibility of mineral resources
  - Recognising distinctive environments
  
- Biodiversity and the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Features
  - Maintenance of indigenous biodiversity
  - Environmental degradation and enhancement opportunities
  
- Sustainable Management of the Coastal Environment
  - Loss of natural coastal character
  - Degradation of critical coastal margins
  - Management of coastal hazards
  - Public access along the coast

## 16.2 MANAGING GROWTH IN RURAL AND COASTAL AREAS

### 16.2.1 STRATEGIC AND DISTRICT CONTEXT

#### 16.2.1.1 DISTRICT GROWTH STRATEGY

The Auckland Regional Growth Strategy: 2050 (“RGS”) provides an overriding policy guide to councils to better manage growth across the region. This strategy identifies the key growth related issues and defines outcomes to provide a consistent and uniform direction for how Auckland’s growth would be managed for the next 50 years.

In response to this growth management initiative, in 1999 the Franklin District Council adopted the first *Franklin District Growth Management Approach* (“DGMA”). The DGMA has been updated with the adoption of the Franklin District Growth Strategy 2051 (dated 2007). The Franklin District Growth Strategy 2007 identifies growth issues, prioritises growth outcomes and provides a growth strategy for the District, to which this District Plan shall have regard.

The Franklin District Growth Strategy 2007 aims to achieve both a regional and district direction for growth, to contain and intensify urban development and enhance transport networks by concentrating growth around the three main towns. It also recognises the need to provide for choice by providing a range of living environments in appropriate locations and allows for new development in selected places. This includes provision for countryside living in defined locations, while limiting rural subdivision elsewhere.

The District’s population is expected to increase to 109,000 (53,000 additional) persons by 2051. Approximately 15,000 additional dwellings need to be provided by 2031 and 24,000 by 2051).

The Franklin District Growth Strategy 2007 focuses growth on the existing settlements and adopts a hierarchical approach to growth management (refer Part 3A.1 *Growth Management Approach*).

The issue for Franklin is to reconcile the outcomes sought by the Franklin District Growth Strategy 2007 with existing latent potential and capacity as well as providing a means for creating additional capacity within the villages in particular. The matter of capacity is further examined in terms of the regional context, latent potential and village living in the following paragraphs.

#### 16.2.1.2 REGIONAL CONTEXT

##### Issues:

The growth issues being faced in the Franklin District are not notably different to those being experienced by other rural areas in the Auckland Region. Its proximity to the Auckland metropolitan areas, comfortable commuting distance, good accessibility and rural amenity, make Franklin a very attractive area in which to reside. Over recent years, there has also been a marked escalation in the national demand for coastal land. Franklin District has not escaped this trend. In addition, it is evident that there has been a considerable increase of countryside living occurring in the rural areas, in particular in the northern part of the District.

The Auckland Regional Growth Strategy 2050 adopts a balanced approach to growth management. In an urban context, it promotes the consolidation of growth through infill development and intensification of existing nodal areas rather than further Greenfield development. It favours areas that have good accessibility and public transport infrastructure in terms of growth options. This approach is further emphasised in the Local Government (Auckland) Amendment Act 2004. A similar approach is adopted for rural parts of the region. However, it is recognised that the restrictions on development opportunities outside the Metropolitan Urban Limits under the Auckland Regional Growth Strategy result in increased pressures for lifestyle and residential development in Franklin. In the rural areas outside existing towns and villages opportunities for countryside living are constrained and limited to defined areas where significant environmental enhancements are achieved.

The southern part of Franklin District lies within the Waikato Region. Environment Waikato Regional Policy Statement does not currently provide broader growth management guidance. Nonetheless Franklin District

employs a growth management strategy that incorporates the whole District and urban and rural growth issues are a cross-boundary matter. The strategy recognises growth pressures related to the Auckland Region and the particular nature of the rural communities and activities in the Environment Waikato area.

### 16.2.1.3 CAPACITY AND LATENT POTENTIAL

#### Issues:

The ability to provide capacity to meet demand has to be considered in the context of the existing settlement pattern within the District and the proximity and influence of the Auckland metropolitan area that creates such demand.

The villages, excluding key serviced villages, while distributed across the District, are limited in their ability to meet expected growth capacity without substantial investment in infrastructure for water, waste water and stormwater. Many dwellings within these villages have been established using septic tanks on relatively small sites (less than 1000m<sup>2</sup>). They are too small to be self-sufficient in terms of services, with little ability to provide for additional dwellings. It is unlikely they would be comprehensively redeveloped to allow village consolidation.

Options do exist, to provide for self-sufficient larger lots on the periphery of villages in selected locations, where environmental effects can be addressed, and where comprehensively planned and at an appropriate scale in relation to the village.

There is also a shortage of village zoned land to meet expected village capacity within the northern part of the District. The failure to provide for any capacity in such locations, where demand is high, may well result in pressure to use existing vacant lots in the surrounding rural and coastal areas or result in inappropriate rural and coastal subdivision.

Within the wider rural and coastal areas a large number of lots were created across the District between the 1970s to 1990s under the auspices of horticultural lots and other purposes. This resulted in a wide distribution of new lots across the District. A significant number of these lots remain vacant. The latent potential within the rural and coastal areas is the number of existing lots that have the potential to be built upon. There are approximately 4500 vacant lots in Franklin District.

The use of vacant lots for countryside living in the last two decades has, however been almost entirely within an area north of the Waikato River. In particular, areas surrounding Pukekohe, east of Waiuku, throughout Waiau Pa, Karaka and Runciman and adjacent to both sides of State Highway 1. Approximately 2000 - 2500 vacant lots remain in this area. This potential, if fully developed, is likely to have an adverse effect upon the ability to use the land resource and have cumulative adverse effects upon the existing rural or coastal character and amenity of the District.

However, the limitations of latent potential and capacity studies must be recognised. Latent potential analysis is particularly difficult given the number of assumptions that need to be made. One of the most important assumptions is that these lots will at some time in the future have a dwelling erected. Market forces and personal circumstances govern this type of activity and despite the fact that there are vacant lots across the Franklin District, many of these may never have houses erected and will remain vacant well into the future due to environmental constraints, nature of current productive use or their unsuitable location.

#### Impact of Current Capacity

This latent potential combined with any entitlement gained through all other rural subdivision provisions can be defined as capacity. The overall capacity needs to be managed to balance environmental issues, competing land uses, the needs and aspirations of the District's residents and the provision of lifestyle choice within a sustainable growth management framework. This includes the impacts of excessive rural capacity upon the continuance and functions of existing villages.

It cannot be ignored that the District must address a significant latent potential issue and the effects this has on releasing more capacity for growth in the rural area, in particular the northern part of the District where such latent capacity is likely to be realised. If alternatives are not provided, the ongoing pressure for the

uptake of latent potential, as and where it is currently provided, may create significant adverse effects on the environment.

The central question is how to manage future growth given the existing vacant lots and the lack of current options, to provide a range of choice for accommodating growth, other than the take up of existing vacant lots.

The District Plan addresses these issues through a growth management strategy that recognises the issues and seeks to achieve better environmental outcomes through a variety of tools. Tools include increasing village and rural capacity through a variety of methods:

- Structure Planning of serviced villages, including Clarks Beach, Kingseat and Patumahoe.
- Self-servicing lots in selected small villages managed through overlay or village growth area methods and/or concept planning for more intensive development.
- The provision of a dedicated rural countryside living zone within the Runciman area, in a location where demand is evident and where accessibility to transport networks are high, and in close proximity to Pukekohe and undertaken in an integrated and sustainable manner.
- A defined Environmental Enhancement Overlay Area, confined to a limited area of the northern part of the District, where demand is evident and provided that there is significant environmental protection and enhancement, a redistribution of existing vacant lots, and matters relating to rural character are addressed.
- More limited subdivision opportunities are provided outside of the northern part of the District where significant environmental protection and enhancement is achieved and where the proliferation and dispersal of lots is avoided.

Fundamentally the growth strategy promoted through the District Plan supports the capacity requirements identified in the Franklin District Growth Strategy 2007, RGS and other regional policy. There are areas of the District where capacity will need to be carefully managed through an active monitoring process. However, at its very core, the District Plan recognises the need to manage growth capacity issues by providing for village growth and limited countryside living opportunities.

## **16.2.2 LIVING IN RURAL AREAS**

### **16.2.2.1 EXISTING COMMUNITIES AND SETTLEMENTS**

#### **Issues:**

A significant proportion of the District's population is distributed in rural areas. The 2006 Census shows that 56% of people live in the District's rural areas, including villages. The 'urban' areas of Pukekohe, Tuakau, and Waiuku accommodate the remaining 44% of the District's population. While Pukekohe has accommodated most of the District's growth in recent years there is a significant portion of growth that is occurring outside the existing towns and villages. Approximately 50% of growth is accommodated outside the towns and villages with the majority of new dwellings over the last 25 years being located within the rural and coastal areas of the northern part of the District.

This demand for countryside living creates a unique tension between those relying on the productive capability of the land and those who, for a variety of reasons, elect to reside in the rural areas. Often the rural amenity and environment that is attributable to primary production, is also valued by those who wish to live outside an urban environment. The demand for such rural living can in turn undermine the viability of primary production activities and erode the amenity and environmental qualities that make the rural area an attractive place in which to live.

The central issue is how to provide for rural living opportunities in areas that consolidate and support existing communities and settlements, retain rural and coastal character, and promote environmental restoration and enhancement, while avoiding a wide and ad-hoc dispersal of countryside living across the District, and further fragmentation of productive lands.

The demand for countryside living has historically been catered for through the provision of rural residential zones or indirectly through the ad hoc development of lots designed for more intensive agricultural or horticultural uses. Limited options have also been available through retirement and general purpose lots available on larger properties, and conservation lots where environmental enhancement has occurred.

Historically the Franklin District has provided rural-residential zones adjacent to the larger urban centres of Pukekohe, Waiuku and Tuakau to cater for and direct some of these lifestyle pressures with lot sizes not generally exceeding 1 hectare or Horticultural Lot subdivision of the 10acre (4 hectare) lot size range created under the auspices for horticulture. A substantial number of lots were created between the 1970s and 1990s. This has provided the main source of lots for countryside living within the District, in particular in the northern part where demand is high. These lots are dispersed across the area, although there are examples where up to 20 lots are grouped into urban style large lot subdivision on existing farm properties with a considerable change in, or little regard to, the character of the location.

The uptake of land has often occurred quite rapidly compared to other forms of development, and lots have often been created that are not the optimum size or layout for those seeking to reside there. Residents complain to Council that 2 to 4 hectares is too small to farm, yet too large to garden. There are examples around the region where these parcels are simply left in pasture and mown. The demand remains however, because this is often the only form of countryside living readily available throughout the region. There is a shortfall of growth opportunities within the District's northern villages and no dedicated area of countryside living opportunities within the areas of high demand.

Further issues can arise when rural residential areas are intensively developed. For example a multitude of on-site wastewater treatment facilities in relatively close proximity can have cumulative effects leading to saturation of soils and groundwater contamination. These issues are often associated with concentrated runoff from stormwater and un-serviced wastewater systems.

The creation of more intensive rural countryside living scattered across the rural area becomes a rural version of the suburban sprawl that the Auckland Regional Growth Strategy is trying to remedy. Scattered development can also create conflict with other rural activities that require rural locations and therefore adversely affects rural amenity. In addition, the creation of countryside living scattered across the whole District, not directly related to any existing services and facilities or within a reasonable proximity to existing towns and villages, raises issues for Council about how to effectively and efficiently provide the services that residents eventually expect. Isolated countryside living, distant from existing main highway networks, can create high levels of transport movements across the District.

It is recognised that there is certainly a demand for countryside living properties, and when there is no supply, the land values escalate. Land values can increase to the point where it becomes more economical to subdivide land to use for country lifestyle residential, rather than to use it for primary production. This has been demonstrated to be the case in many areas around New Zealand. This result would severely affect the community's primary focus to preserve the primary productive capabilities of Franklin District. In addition, demand (and take up of rural land for countryside living) is high in the northern part of the District in proximity to Auckland and the motorway network. It is in this area that a large number of lots created for horticulture still remain. These are dispersed across the area with little regard for locational constraints and adverse effects on character and amenity. If fully developed they may have a significant adverse effect upon amenity and rural character of this area.

The Franklin District Growth Strategy 2007 recognises the need for a countryside living area within the northern part of the District. It is considered appropriate to provide a zone for rural countryside living in the vicinity of Runciman. This area has good accessibility to State Highway 1 (motorway), State Highway 22 and Mill Road (the main link from the motorway to Pukekohe). It is immediately north of Pukekohe and in an area where there is high demand for countryside living. A comprehensive integrated method for the establishment of this Rural Countryside Living Zone shall be applied to address environmental effects, promote environmental enhancement and appropriate forms of development.

Within the wider rural and coastal areas it is appropriate to provide further countryside living only in the northern part of the District (Rural Environmental Enhancement Overlay Area), and only on larger lots that can absorb adverse effects, and where a combination of environmental enhancements and redistribution of existing vacant lots is achieved. Incentives can be offered for the transfer of titles of vacant lots into such developments.

A sustainable model for living opportunities outside of the three main towns, and indeed rural growth generally, would enable incremental intensification of selected villages, self servicing options within selected villages, a dedicated Rural Countryside Living Zone, limited area for rural environmental enhancement lots, and outside all of these, more limited opportunities for subdivision. The pressure on land generated by the demand for countryside living can be managed by directing such development to those areas where the effects of that development can be avoided, remedied, or mitigated.

### **16.2.2.2 VILLAGES**

#### **Issues:**

Approximately 13% of the District's population resides in villages. However, the villages themselves service more than the village residents. The villages form a community hub or focal point for each area. The villages in the Franklin District have common elements, but also have varying opportunities and constraints. Only some villages have a nucleus of community facilities such as halls, recreation grounds and commercial services. While a few are serviced, others are in need of reticulated potable water and sewerage services.

In a resource management context, the villages constitute a physical resource that provides for the social and economic wellbeing of the people and communities of Franklin District. While the villages themselves can be viewed as a resource for the community of interest, beyond the immediate residents, they also generate costs to the community at large. In terms of public facilities such as community halls, these costs may be fairly distributed across the entire community, as the entire community shares the benefit of these resources. However, other costs, such as the provision of reticulated water supply and wastewater services, more directly benefit those residents who are connected to these services.

In many villages, existing on-site wastewater disposal is simply not sustainable, and there is an urgent need to provide new self-servicing technologies and/or reticulation and treatment facilities. Many of the villages in need of new services are not large enough for the economy of scale required to fund the provision of services. In such cases, making provision for further development opportunities and village growth will help to share the cost of service provision.

In terms of character, villages within the District generally fall into one of two broad categories. The first category is situated in the general rural areas, which have grown from their role as a service centre for the local community. The second category can be defined by their proximity to the coast, and the relationship that the villages and their communities have with the coast.

Within each of these categories there are different levels of growth capability that relate to the particular nature of each village. These are described as follows:

1. Those suitably located and able to readily accommodate additional growth at an urban/village intensity.
2. Those suited to providing for self sufficient residential type development due to their sensitive and often coastal locations and inability to provide for more intensive serviced forms of development.
3. Those villages subject to development constraints or locations that are simply not ready for further expansion for at least the life of this Plan.

### **16.2.3 CONFLICTS IN THE COASTAL AND RURAL AREAS – MATTERS OF REVERSE SENSITIVITY AND RURAL CHARACTER**

#### **16.2.3.1 ISSUE: REVERSE SENSITIVITY**

The District's economic and community wellbeing is heavily dependant on a viable and diverse rural economy. The introduction of more opportunities for rural lifestyle living and the quality of life expectations of these new residents will inevitably lead to increased conflict with other land uses. There are also conflicts arising between farming activities and other different productive activities.



It is therefore imperative that the District Plan addresses the matter of reverse sensitivity while providing for some recognition of the needs of residents. There is a need to recognise and protect existing rural activities and their typical characteristics to ensure reverse sensitivity issues are avoided, remedied or mitigated.

Primary productive activities continue to develop throughout the rural and coastal areas of Franklin. Utilising the rural resource base and playing an important role in enabling the community to provide for its wellbeing, it is evident that the productive base is diversifying with a range of activities becoming more established, such as commercial flower growing and poultry farming. These activities are not located in any specific area but are characterised by their dispersed nature.

The Council considers that many of the activities that use the rural resource base for productive purposes, and their associated effects, are part of a typical rural environment, and need to be accepted as part of living and working in the rural area and can be expected to be experienced by all rural residents at some time. The range of effects arising from rural productive activities includes noise, odour, traffic and dust.

There is increasing conflict between those seeking to live in the rural area for "lifestyle" reasons and the effects of activities using the rural resource base for productive purposes. As a result of these conflicts, there can be demands to restrict legitimate primary productive activities in order to reduce what in the circumstances, are normally regarded as acceptable impacts. This potential restriction of activities affects not only established activities but also the potential establishment of new businesses. An outcome of this conflict is that businesses and activities using the rural resource base for productive purposes are in turn seeking to restrict countryside living opportunities.

In addressing this issue under the RMA, the concept of Reverse Sensitivity has been developed and accepted by the courts. Essentially, this concept involves placing responsibility for avoiding, remedying or mitigating any impacts on the receiver rather than the generator because it is their decision to locate in an environment in which a level of adverse effects is normally acceptable which gives rise to the problem.

Examples of effects subject to Reverse Sensitivity include:

- Odour associated with normal FARMING activities, such as from dairy sheds, silage pits, onions drying, and INTENSIVE FARMING operations;
- The use of chemical sprays;
- Noise from dogs, farm machinery, bird scaring devices, hay making and other farming related activities; and
- Dust, noise and traffic from mineral extraction activities.

Adverse effects can include incompatibility between different productive activities. Examples include:

- Agricultural sprays affecting greenhouse or organic farming operations;
- Odour causing a nuisance to neighbours;
- Sprays and fertilisers affecting stock and people.

It is not seen as reasonable that activities traditionally associated with the rural environment should be penalised because of a decision to move to that environment for the lifestyle choice that countryside living is perceived to offer.

This does not mean that rural productive activities have licence to pollute as there is still a responsibility on those carrying out such activities to protect the natural environment and to minimise unnecessary adverse impacts on neighbouring productive and non productive activities. The various productive primary activities found in the rural environment can differ significantly in character and generate effects, which can give rise to incompatibility. Managing such conflicts while enabling productive activities to continue presents challenges.

These issues are given effect to through the Objectives and Policies contained in Parts:

17A Rural and Coastal Resource Management Strategic Objectives  
 17B.2 Village Objectives  
 17B.3 Village Growth Policies  
 17E Management Areas  
 9.3 Transportation Objectives Policies and Methods

## 21.6.1 Objective – Providing for Mineral Resources

**16.2.3.2 ISSUE: RURAL AND COASTAL AMENITY AND CHARACTER**

There is a concern that there has been a loss of landscape amenity values and character of rural and coastal Franklin through rural-urban sprawl. Rural and coastal landscapes and character can be altered by rural-urban sprawl, and its associated visual form, spatial patterns, roading, access, earthworks and structures. Cumulatively such development may irreversibly create a form of urban environment across the rural and coastal zones of the District. These zones comprise a large area of the District, and include:

- Rural areas where rural production activities are dominant;
- Coastal areas where rural activities are undertaken;
- Rural and coastal areas where there is minimal rural activity (eg. conservation areas).

The zones do not include the villages and Rural Countryside Living Zone, although it is recognised that these contribute to the amenity of rural and coastal communities.

There are a range of attributes which contribute to the character of the locality, and these can vary across the District. Attributes that can contribute to rural character include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a) The dominance in the landscape of natural vegetation and dynamic primary production regimes, including pasture, crops and forestry;
- b) The absence or subservience of manmade structures other than those related to rural production activities;
- c) A high ratio of open space relative to the built environment;
- d) Significant areas of land in pasture, crops, forestry and/or indigenous vegetation;
- e) Noises, smells, dust and effects associated with the use of rural land for a wide range of agricultural, horticultural, forestry and mineral extraction and processing purposes;
- f) Low population densities relative to urban areas.

Coastal character may include aspects of rural character (as described above) and may also include coastal specific attributes such as:

- i. Landscape and natural features including headlands and promontories;
- ii. Coastal processes and natural systems at the interface with the coastline;
- iii. Presence of indigenous coastal vegetation;
- iv. Coastal habitats, including wetland and estuarine environments.

It is recognised that rural landscapes can be visually altered by structures and buildings such as greenhouses and packhouses. However these are recognised as important components of primary production activities, form part of the rural environment and are generally considered rural in appearance and value.

It is also recognised that the District's rural and coastal character is varied in nature and comprises landscapes, landforms and structures. These are also areas of active and dynamic primary production and associated activities rather than necessarily benign landscapes. Mineral extraction activities can also significantly alter land forms and hence modify rural landscapes (Refer also to Part 5.0 Conservation).

The principal issue is the detrimental change in rural or coastal character that can arise from extensive areas of countryside living development (including as a result of subdivision) throughout the rural and coastal zones. Direction and measures are required to address such effects.

## **16.3 SUSTAINABILITY OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

The land, soil and water resources of the District are finite resources upon which much of the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the people of the District relies. The life-supporting capacity of these resources is fundamental to the identity and prosperity of Franklin.

The management of these resources must therefore be focused on ensuring that they remain in a suitable state and form for present and future generations. This manifests itself in two ways.

In the first instance activities should not adversely affect the life supporting capacity of natural and physical resources. Secondly the versatility of these resources should not be lost or compromised by the effects of activities.

Activities that have an adverse effect on the rural resources of the District can be grouped as follows:

- Those that are not reliant on rural resources for their location. Where any adverse effects cannot be avoided or mitigated through conditions, then the Plan requires that they locate in other, or urban, areas. For instance, ad-hoc residential development (in the form of countryside living) with a high level of fragmentation can prevent or severely limit activities that rely on the natural resources from continuing or establishing;
- Some activities that directly rely upon particular resources also have the greatest potential to damage those resources. Such activities may not therefore be sustainable in terms of their cumulative effects on land, soil and water resources.

### **16.3.1 ACCESSIBILITY TO LAND, SOIL AND WATER RESOURCES**

#### **16.3.1.1 MAINTENANCE OF THE RURAL PRODUCTION SYSTEM**

##### **Issues:**

The versatility of the land, soil and water resources of the District is fundamental to its identity and prosperity. The management of these resources must focus on ensuring that they remain in a suitable state and form for present and future generations. The sustainable management of the District's rural production system is one of the key issues facing the District.

There are many factors important to the maintenance of the rural production system including:

- i. Soil
- ii. Site slope
- iii. Site drainage
- iv. Stormwater
- v. Flooding matters
- vi. Wind exposure
- vii. Availability of irrigation water
- viii. Effects of neighbours on the activity, and effects of the activity on neighbours
- ix. Previous cropping history
- x. Relevant contaminants of soils and their associated effects
- xi. The relationship with regional planning matters concerning discharges
- xii. Transport network management

Rural land uses in the District have in recent years changed with a reduction in the area in pastoral farming and an increase in cropping. The greatest changes in use have been in the area between Pukekohe, Pukekawa and Waiuku, in which there has been a significant increase in cropping.

### 16.3.1.2 VERSATILE SOILS AND FRAGMENTATION

#### Issues:

A principal issue of concern is the continued fragmentation of rural land into ever-smaller lot sizes. Land with soils of high versatility should not be compromised by fragmentation, because:

- Soils of class I, II and IIIe are scarce
- Further fragmentation can reduce versatility for high productivity

One way of measuring land fragmentation is in the context of the Land Use Capability (LUC) classification. The significance of the District soils/land can be measured by comparing the proportion of LUC Classes I and II present in NZ as a whole to the proportion in the District. NZ has around 5.4% of its land area as Class I and II soils, compared with Franklin District, which has around 20%. If Class III land, that can be used for cropping, was included, then about 30% of Franklin District comprises Class I, II and III land. Within Franklin District, land classified as I and II occupies 45,000 hectares.

The high versatility description conveys the essential advantage over soils of other classification, namely that the soils support a very wide range of productive uses.

LUC maps should not be used as a substitute for accurate on-site measurement of soil capability.

There are exceptions to allow for further subdivision of versatile soils:

- Expansion of existing towns and villages
- Provision of network utilities
- Where significant environmental gains can be demonstrated

Many small rural lots (especially those about 4 hectares) that are located in areas of high quality soil do not have houses or other buildings on them. If all these titles were to be fully developed, the consequences would be major. The rural countryside would change in character and use, from rural to rural-residential. This would have wide-ranging adverse effects on the rural economy, business sector and sustainability of versatile soils.

### 16.3.2 DEGRADED WATER QUALITY AND RIPARIAN HABITAT

#### Issues:

The biodiversity and water quality functions of the District's existing stream and coastal margins have been significantly degraded through historic land use. The stream and coastal systems and environment are intricately linked. The protection and enhancement of these margins will significantly improve the state of water resources both inland and in receiving coastal environments.

While water resource management is predominantly a Regional Council function, in order to achieve integrated management, the District Plan must recognise the relationship between water and land use activities. Effective management of water resources requires a firm understanding of the effect of adjacent land use/management on water quantity and quality of the connections between freshwater and coastal water.

For some stream catchments and aquifers in the Franklin District, current water demand is equivalent to the quantities available.

If water is taken from a groundwater aquifer at a rate faster than the rate at which it is recharged, then this may cause long term decline in aquifer water level and pressure. Overdrawing water from streams and rivers can result in reduced flows and water levels. This in turn may result in lower water depth and velocity, and higher water temperatures in summer, which can affect plants and animals living in these waterways. Already some of Franklin's streams and aquifers are fully allocated. However this is a matter more appropriately addressed at a regional level.

The groundwater resource within the district is a significant source of water supply to both agriculture and to urban communities and activities. Of particular importance is the matter of the replenishment of such aquifers through groundwater recharge, such as the role of the Pukekohe plateau and the Pukekohe Hill area.

Urban development has the potential to give rise to significant adverse effects on both surface and groundwater resources, potentially reducing recharge to aquifers from rainfall. Any alteration to existing regimes should avoid or mitigate any such potential effects.

Water resources may be adversely affected by land use activities. Some water in shallow volcanic aquifers beneath the Bombay, Glenbrook and Pukekohe areas contain high levels of nitrates.

Increasing nitrate levels in the shallower groundwater aquifers is a particular concern as the water in the aquifers is used for human consumption and in some places, nitrate levels have already exceeded the New Zealand drinking water standards. These aquifers also feed springs at the head of many streams in the District and the heightened level of this nutrient may promote nuisance growths in the streams. Nitrogenous fertiliser is responsible for part of this problem and is amenable to management by better management practices such as the timing and rate of application and better irrigation management. It is important that fertilisers are used to supply nutrients to the soil, however reference should be made to the Franklin Sustainability Project and the Doing it Right manual for guidance on how to reduce the potential for adverse effects and to ensure a balanced approach to fertiliser application.

Discharge of sewage and other wastes into water is undesirable and unacceptable, as well as being culturally offensive to Maori. While on-site wastewater disposal methods may be appropriate, and will be required in some cases, these must be able to be designed, installed and maintained so as not to pollute or otherwise compromise groundwater resources.

**Adverse effects:**

- a) Limitations on water availability
- b) Water pollution
- c) Water runoff
- d) Reduction in groundwater recharge.

### **16.3.3 ACCESSIBILITY OF MINERAL RESOURCES**

**Issues:**

Franklin District contains an extensive variety of mineral resources. These include extensive aggregate material such as basalt and scoria of good quality, greywacke of both low and good quality, various tuff material, limestone deposits, sand and gravels. Good quality basalt and scoria materials primarily occur over the central part of the District, associated with the various volcanoes of this area and extend south of Patumahoe to south of the Waikato volcanic fields between Te Kohanga and Pukekawa. Good quality sedimentary greywacke occurs east of the Bombay Hills throughout the Hunua area and good quality chert is found in the upper areas of the Hunua Ranges. Considerable gravel fields are located on the lower flanks of the Hunua Ranges and on the east coast lowlands. There are limestone deposits south of the Waikato River. Sand deposits occur within the Waikato River valley system and the western coastal areas of the Awhitu Peninsula. Extensive iron-sand deposits are located along areas of the western coast.

Aggregates are used extensively in the roading and construction industries. The availability of existing sources of aggregate minerals is declining throughout the Auckland area with the closure of major quarries and restrictions associated with urban development. It can be expected that there will be a greater reliance on the Franklin District as a source of aggregates in the future, in particular where such resources are readily accessible to the major transport routes to Auckland.

The regional and national significance of the mineral resource in the Franklin District should not be underestimated. There are a number of active and proposed quarries throughout the District, including the proposed Pokeno basalt quarry, which is expected to produce in excess of 1.5 million tonnes of aggregate per annum and the Iron Sand extraction plant at Maioro that remains an essential resource and extraction facility for the Steel Mill at Glenbrook.

Resource accessibility must be recognised within the context that some subdivision and development can have an adverse effect on the viable operation of quarrying and related activities. The potential adverse environmental effects and the quality of life for new and existing residents must be balanced against the community needs for quarried resources.

Mineral extraction and the processing of minerals have the potential to cause significant adverse environmental effects. Their very nature may require considerable alterations to landforms, the creation of noise and dust and potential impacts from discharges. It is therefore necessary to ensure that such potential effects are mitigated and where the environment is particularly sensitive, that such activities be avoided.

Mineral resources and their appropriate management are, therefore, a significant resource management issue for the District.

The resource management approach must focus on potentially conflicting directions of:

- a) Providing appropriate opportunities for mineral extraction and processing,
- b) Protecting the mineral resource from sensitive urban or rural development which could render them unavailable, and
- c) Ensuring that mineral extraction and processing activities do not adversely effect the environment and surrounding community.

These issues are given effect to through the Objectives and Policies contained in parts:

17A.1 Rural and Coastal Resource Management Strategic Objectives

17C.3.1 Objective – Managing Conflicts

21.6.1 Objective – Providing for Mineral Resources

21.6.2 Objective – Managing Mineral Resources

#### **16.3.4 RECOGNISING DISTINCTIVE ENVIRONMENTS**

##### **Issues:**

The rural and coastal parts of the District have areas of distinct character and diversity. There are three unique coastal environments plus the Waikato River with particular and differing environmental issues to address. There are also a range of distinctive rural environments that reflect the nature of topography, extent of indigenous vegetation cover and the degree of land fragmentation and pressure for growth.

The coastal environment has some particular environmental processes and characteristics that require tailored responses. Some rural areas are particularly sensitive to further fragmentation that would compromise the rural character and nature of these areas and the accessibility of natural resources.

These distinctions are reflected in the form and function of existing villages showing relationships to rural or coastal locations.

Planning for the Franklin District had typically considered the District under a one-size fits all approach whereby District wide objectives, policies and rules failed to recognise these unique characteristics. Specific environmental outcomes are desirable that reflect particular parts of the District.

These issues are given effect to through the Objectives and Policies contained in Parts:

- 5 Conservation of Natural Features (5.2 Objectives, Policies and Methods)
- 7 Natural Hazards (7.2 Objectives, Policies and Methods, 7.3 Natural Hazard Avoidance and Mitigation)
- 17A Rural and Coastal Resource Management Strategic Objectives
- 17B.2 Village Objective
- 17B.3 Village Growth Policies
- 17E Management Areas

### 16.3.5 PUKEKOHE HILL

#### Issues:

The issues facing Pukekohe Hill are a reflection of what is occurring in many parts of the District. The Pukekohe Hill area constitutes a valuable natural resource. It forms an important part of the District's elite land resource. For historical reasons the Hill is closely subdivided into 2-4 hectare blocks. The degree of fragmentation, however, has not prevented the land's effective use for intensive horticultural purposes, with individual sites being cropped separately and in conjunction. Properties are in demand for either purchasing or leasing by the 'grower' community. Areas unsuitable for cropping on account of slope or soil type can and are being used for pastoral purposes.

In the past there has been pressure for residential subdivision in the Rural Zone, and in particular on Anzac Road. After special investigation and analysis of the northern slopes of the Hill, the North Pukekohe Hill Structure Plan has been included into the district plan, together with targeted provisions in Rule 54.8. A change of use and development enabled by the Structure Plan will ensure a comprehensive and integrated approach is taken to the future change in the settlement pattern.

The Hill has high landscape values which are capable of being affected by the adverse visual effects of both subdivision and development. Given these important landscape values all new buildings in the Rural-Residential zone and Pukekohe Hill Special Policy Area are required to be assessed in terms of visual effects. The benefits of this approach are considered to outweigh any additional administrative costs, bearing in mind that it applies to a relatively small area of the total District.

Plan provisions are also needed that safeguard views both towards and from the Hill. For instance, shelter belts are relevant to the extent they could potentially obstruct views from the summit's public reserve. Plan provisions, including those within the North Pukekohe Hill Structure Plan and the Special Policy Area, seek to manage and, where possible, improve these views.

Parts of the Hill have been rezoned for residential and rural-residential living purposes. Other parts remain in a rural zoning. It is important that the interface between rural and urban zones be well managed to minimise any adverse effects of rural activities, such as spray drift and noise, on adjoining urban land uses. Similarly, the introduction of sporadic residential or rural-residential developments into the Rural Zone must be avoided.

Any adverse effects of soil erosion and stormwater flows from cropped areas are capable of mitigation if not total avoidance, through the management practices followed by some growers.

Parts of the Hill's eastern and northern slopes drain to the Tutaenui Catchment which has existing flooding problems. Essential capital works in the order of \$3 million are required to improve the situation. To avoid worsening the position it is essential that additional stormwater runoff not be generated in this catchment from further areas of conventional residential subdivision. The Pukekohe plateau, including the Pukekohe Hill, provides an important groundwater resource within the district. It is considered that any urban development on Pukekohe Hill should not adversely affect the replenishment of such aquifers through groundwater recharge. Any alteration to the existing land uses on Pukekohe Hill should avoid or mitigate any such potential effects.

Urbanisation and rural-residential development of part of the northern slopes of Pukekohe Hill has been provided through the North Pukekohe Structure Plan (Refer Part 54). Amongst other matters this provides a mechanism for reducing the adverse effects of stormwater runoff, siltation and flooding upon the Pukekohe township and South Pukekohe and Tutaenui catchment areas and stream systems.

Stormwater provisions, standards and management systems are included within the North Pukekohe Structure Plan to better avoid the present levels of flooding and to manage stormwater generating from Pukekohe Hill. They are also necessary in order to mitigate the potential effects of the proposed urban development. In addition these standards and stormwater management requirements recognise and enhance the role of the Pukekohe Hill in respect to groundwater replenishment. The level of development is controlled and standards applied to the North Pukekohe Structure Plan to avoid any adverse effects upon the potential for groundwater recharge into the aquifer and stream systems.

Allowance for greater development in the North Pukekohe Structure Plan area has raised the question of appropriate methods of wastewater disposal. In the Special Rural-Residential 1 Zone in particular, ground conditions are regarded as being generally suitable for on-site systems, but these must be able to be designed, installed and maintained so as not to pollute or otherwise compromise groundwater resources. Care will be taken at subdivision approval stage to ensure that wastewater disposal is adequately provided for. In some circumstances, Council may allow or require connections to a reticulated wastewater disposal system, or require modifications to subdivision and/ or wastewater disposal system design.

From consultation with tangata whenua representatives and related investigations it is apparent that the Hill comprises ancestral Maori land in terms of Section 6 of the Act. Local hapu identify strongly with the Hill and consider it to be waahi tapu. A clear preference has been expressed by those consulted that the summit and upper slopes of Pukekohe Hill in particular be preserved and protected from inappropriate development. The absence of recorded archaeological sites does not detract from these considerations. This concern has been taken into account as a basis for the Special Policy Area below the summit, and in the North Pukekohe Hill Structure Plan.

**Potential Adverse effects:**

- Irreversible loss of elite (highly versatile) land to indiscriminate residential subdivision;
- Adverse visual effects of both continued urban development and by other activities which are incongruous with the Hills' natural character;
- Conflict between rural and urban activities;
- Adverse effects on water resources;
- Loss of cultural values if urbanised.



<b>16.4</b>	<b>BIODIVERSITY AND THE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF NATURAL FEATURES</b>
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**16.4.1 MAINTENANCE OF INDIGENOUS BIODIVERSITY****Issues:**

There is a need to protect and enhance indigenous vegetation and habitat of indigenous fauna. These areas of indigenous vegetation and habitat of indigenous fauna are important in terms of biological diversity, life supporting capacity, landscape, open space, recreation and water quality.

## 16.5 SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

### 16.5.1 LOSS OF NATURAL COASTAL CHARACTER

#### Issues:

Extensive coastlines bound the District on the Tasman Sea, Manukau Harbour and Firth of Thames. In many areas, the coastal environment retains a very high level of natural character, relatively free of built structures, in close proximity to the coastline.

The Thames Coast (Seabird Coast Management Area) is recognised as an internationally important wildlife habitat.

Along the Franklin District coastline, there are many significant geological sites and features, for instance various sections of coastal cliffs south of Port Waikato, particularly the areas between Huriwai River and Waikawau Stream, Waiwiri Beach (immediately south of Otangaroa Stream) and the Ngatutura Point and coast immediately northward.

The Miranda Chenier Plain is a unique landform in New Zealand and of international importance as a site of scientific value. The ridges also contain significant information on coastal environmental conditions over the last 3000-4000 years. The Chenier Plain has been extensively modified by drainage and pastoral land use and to some extent by shell extraction – but nonetheless retains a very high potential for ecological restoration.

The Whakatiwai Gravels to the immediate north are also geologically significant landforms and the combined area is the only known occurrence in the world of a Chenier Plain/gravel ridge association.

If the District's unique and diverse natural character is to be preserved, and important habitats protected, the effects of development need to be carefully managed. "Coastal Protection Setback", the "Additional Natural Character Area" and identification of "Special Character Areas" and Schedule 5A relating to Conservation of Outstanding Natural Features are tools the District Plan uses to address these issues.

#### Adverse Effects:

- a) Loss of the natural character of the Franklin Coast
- b) Damage to the internationally recognised Miranda Chenier Plain
- c) Loss of internationally recognised wildlife habitat

### 16.5.2 DEGRADATION OF CRITICAL COASTAL MARGINS

#### Issues:

Critical coastal margin environments such as sand dunes, estuarine wetlands and mangroves, play a significant role in maintaining natural character and assisting the function of natural biological and physical systems, as well as mitigating the impacts of coastal hazards, including:

1. The provision and protection of coastal habitats (especially in estuarine margins)
2. A source of organic inputs to the harbour food chain
3. Bird roosting, foraging and/or nesting habitats
4. Filtering of discharges from land
5. Natural protection from coastal erosion and flooding
6. Screening estuarine wetlands from adjacent land uses
7. The dynamic functioning of physical coastal processes (e.g. back-beach dunes with native sand grasses play an integral role in natural dune repair following coastal erosion).

A range of human activities around the Franklin Coast has often significantly modified these critical coastal margin environments. For example, off-road vehicles and access by stock (e.g. cattle) can lead to serious damage to the sand dunes and to inland migrating sand sheets. Farm management that does not take into account the mobility of these areas often leads to problems of sand instability on sand country along the coast.

Riparian vegetation is almost always absent along the landward margins of estuarine wetlands - as a consequence of land use activities pushing right to the harbour edge and/or the desire to maintain extensive sea views from local dwellings. In some cases, even the salt marsh and other maritime environments have been truncated or degraded by coastal structures, drainage, levees, reclamation and/or stock access.

Similarly, beach and dune environments have often been damaged or degraded by earthworks, coastal structures (especially shoreline armouring and storm water outlets) and other activities. The severe degradation of coastal margin areas around existing coastal villages/settlements (such as Clarks, Glenbrook and Graham's beaches) illustrate the potential for damage to coastal beach environments and associated coastal values if adjacent subdivision and development is not carefully designed and managed.

However, in most rural areas, there is still very high potential for the protection and restoration of degraded coastal margins. This should be given emphasis in the future management of the Franklin coast.

**Adverse Effects:**

- a) Degradation of critical coastal margin environments such as sand dunes, estuarine wetlands and mangroves.
- b) Increased vulnerability to coastal hazards
- c) Loss of the natural character of the Franklin coast
- d) Decreased biodiversity in the critical coastal environments

**16.5.3 MANAGEMENT OF COASTAL HAZARDS**

**Issues:**

Coastal hazards (including coastal erosion, coastal flooding and wind erosion) are naturally occurring processes that affect the Franklin coast. In addition, there is the potential impact of sea level rise from predicted climate change.

Erosion problems at some existing settlements have led to the placement of erosion protection works, which have seriously degraded the natural character, amenity values and public access along the coast at many sites (e.g. Glenbrook and Clarks Beaches). These adverse impacts are incompatible with relevant statutory provisions and the use of hard engineering structures to manage coastal erosion is becoming increasingly unacceptable to relevant consenting agencies.

Present best estimates suggest that mean sea level may rise by 0.3 - 0.5m over the next 100 years that in turn has the potential to further increase coastal hazard risk.

Therefore, in order to avoid erosion hazard problems and adverse impacts on coastal values, future subdivision and development around the Franklin coast will need to allow a sufficient buffer zone to accommodate natural shoreline movements and erosion.

Consideration has been given to coastal hazards in the establishment of a "Coastal Protection Setback".

**Adverse Effects of Coastal Hazard Structures:**

- a) Degradation of the natural character of the coast
- b) Loss of amenity values
- c) Loss of public access to and along the coast
- d) Destruction of land based assets by coastal hazards

**Beneficial Effects of Coastal Protection Setback:**

- a) Enhanced natural character of the coast
- b) Enhanced amenity values
- c) Enhanced public access to and along the coast
- d) Less damage to property including buildings and structures

**16.5.4 PUBLIC ACCESS TO AND ALONG THE COAST****Issues:**

The protection and enhancement of public access to and along the coast is given strong emphasis in relevant statutory provisions. Public road access to the Tasman Coast is extremely limited, occurring at only three locations along the entire length.

In some areas of the Manukau Harbour Management Area, public access is very restricted. For example, there is no public access to the coast from Hingaia to Elletts Beach. However aspirations to provide public access could conflict with other environmental outcomes relating to the protection of wader bird habitat, in particular the desire to protect the wader bird habitats and Tangata Whenua Waahi Tapu sites along the Manukau foreshore area.

Public access to and along the Seabird Coast is generally well provided. While it is desirable to improve public access to the coast over time, experience at some sites on the Franklin coast (particularly Karioitahi), indicates that public access can lead to significant management issues. These problems include vandalism of public property, the common abandonment of vehicles, land damage caused by off road vehicles (eg. damage to dune vegetation leading to wind erosion) and user conflicts and safety concerns. However, any policies and proposals regarding coastal access for the public need to have regard to Policy 3.5.1 of the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement.

The Council has a responsibility to address coastal access issues consistent with the National Coastal Policy Statement. Given the complex issues, it is appropriate that Council develop a reserve management strategy, including identifying Esplanade Reserve acquisition opportunities.

**Adverse Effects:**

- a) Limited public access to and along the coast
- b) Limiting future recreation and amenity values on the coast
- c) Complex public use issues and conflicts.