

INTRODUCTION

Nature of the Environment

The Franklin District is predominantly a rural district. Franklin encompasses a wide variety of natural and physical environments, attributes and localities. It includes distinctive coastal and natural environments, extensive areas of native bush, riparian and stream systems (including the lower reaches of the Waikato River), natural features and landscapes. Its particular attributes include its varied coast, open space and rural character qualities, as well as areas of natural and ecological habitats and beauty. It also has many sites of importance to tangata whenua.

Franklin's rural areas are not benign. In these areas various rural activities and farming practices (such as farming, forestry and horticulture, mineral extraction and recreational activities) occur. These activities are an integral part of the environment and make a positive contribution to the District's community well being. Towns, villages and countryside living are inter-dispersed into this environment.

The District is serviced by the main towns of Pukekohe, Waiuku and Tuakau as well as villages. These service and provide a focus point for the wider community. They also provide the key for accommodating the greater part of the population growth within the District.

Issues

A key issue is how growth and demand for residential land, and in particular countryside living, is managed. This includes the adverse impacts of countryside living upon the rural and coastal environments and character and the need to reinforce and promote sustainable growth within the towns and villages.

There is a need to promote the sustainable management of the resources of the District. This includes the use of the rural land (including versatile land) and water resources, for farming, horticulture and other related activities.

The relationship of the tangata whenua to the District is recognised as a matter for consideration in the Plan and specific objectives and policies relating to Maori are contained in Part 4.

The District also contains some distinctive environments, including the Waikato River, the Manukau Harbour and the Hauraki Gulf. A central issue is how the Plan manages adverse effects upon these environments to ensure their on-going sustainability.

The District also contains a number of major industries (including Glenbrook Steel Mill and Paerata Dairy Factory) and extensive areas of mineral resources (aggregates, iron sands and limestone). A range of activities can adversely impact upon these resources.

These key issues are briefly discussed under the headings of:

PART 3A Managing the Effects of Growth

PART 3B Sustainable Management and Enhancement of the Natural and Physical Environment

PART 3C Other Resource Management Issues

The District Strategic Objectives are specified in Part 3D to address the key issues of growth management and environmental sustainability.

Growth Pressures and Escalation of Demand for Rural land

The proximity of Auckland City and its growing and changing population exerts a high demand for land in the rural area of the District for countryside living properties. The Auckland Region is under constant pressure for growth including the take-up of rural land for countryside living.

The growth issues being faced in the District are not notably different to those being experienced by other rural areas in the Auckland Region. Its proximity to the Auckland metropolitan area, comfortable commuting distance, good accessibility, and rural amenity make some parts of the District very attractive areas to reside in. A significant distinction from other areas of the Region is the high level of rural farming and horticultural activities and the extent of versatile land that is present.

Over recent years, there has been an increase in demand for coastal and rural land for countryside living. Much of the population increase has occurred in the rural and coastal areas in the form of countryside living using many lots created for other rural activities. This has largely been in a dispersed and somewhat ad-hoc form of *'rural sprawl'*. While countryside living has occurred throughout the rural and coastal areas, by far the greatest proportion has been in the northern part of the District.

A large number of vacant lots were created between the 1970s and 1990s. Many presently vacant lots may never be built on because of their productive value, use, size, topography or location. However, in the northern part of the District, where there is high demand for countryside living, there are many existing vacant lots located on areas of versatile land. Without alternatives these may be likely to be utilised for countryside living.

Effects of Growth and Resource Management Matters to Consider

- *Sustainability and ACCESSIBILITY of Resources*

Because of the close proximity to Auckland land resources have, in places, been greatly fragmented through subdivision. The high level of land fragmentation and resultant residential development, potentially impacts upon the ability to use, and continue to use the land and soil resource for production and rural activities. Production and rural activities contribute significantly to the well being of the community.

Subdivision and subsequent residential developments can affect land use activities to the point where activities that directly rely upon large or well shaped land parcels, or the life supporting capacity of soils may be constrained in terms of location and operation. This can undermine the potential of the District's rural resources to meet the needs of present and future generations, and indirectly the economic and social well-being of the District as a whole. Subdivision, where separate ownership results are difficult to reverse, and through land fragmentation the opportunities for land use activities that require larger more continuous land resources may well be lost.

There is a need to direct a greater proportion of the District's growth into existing towns and villages and where appropriate, establish new villages around existing activity nodes. Rural subdivision and countryside living should avoid a proliferation of countryside living properties across the District and be provided for in an integrated manner.

- *Amenity and Rural and Coastal Character*

Extensive and unfettered development of the rural and coastal areas for countryside living can have major adverse effects on the significant and valued natural and physical resources within these areas. This includes effects of dispersed countryside living upon the character and amenity of the rural and coastal areas. Certain parts of the District display a more intensive settlement pattern and a consequential loss of open character. Appropriate management of development is required to maintain and enhance the rural and coastal amenity and character. The unmanaged expansion of villages can impact on the character and amenity of the coast.

- *Conflict between Residential and Rural Activities*

There is increasing conflict between those seeking to live in the rural area for "lifestyle" reasons and activities using the rural resource base for productive purposes. This includes potential reverse sensitivity adverse effects upon rural industry as well as agricultural and horticultural activities. Countryside living dispersed throughout the rural and coastal areas may give rise to reverse sensitivity effects and complaints, which could restrict or curtail many activities reliant on the rural resource base and their ability to continue.

In addition there are also conflicts arising between different productive activities. Examples include:

- Agricultural sprays affecting greenhouse operations, and
- Odour causing a nuisance to neighbours.
- Concern over use of rural roads by heavy vehicles

Measures are required to avoid a wide dispersal of countryside living and to give direction how such conflicting countryside living can be managed within the rural areas.

- *Latent Potential*

Many lots created in the past are vacant and have the potential to be used in the future. This is referred to as 'latent potential or vacant lots'. A large number of these lots were created between the 1970s and 1990s. A portion of these lots have been developed for countryside living, primarily in the northern part of the District. The full utilisation of these existing lots may adversely impact upon the rural environment, existing activities and rural character. Many vacant lots may never be built on because of their productive use, size, topography or location. However, in the northern part of the District there are many vacant lots located on areas of versatile land and without alternatives these may be utilised for countryside living. In other areas of the District, while vacant lots exist, there has been little development because of modest population growth and other reasons.

- *Impacts upon Villages*

An unfettered and extensive dispersal of countryside living can undermine the ability to sustainably manage the existing villages. A matter to be addressed is the manner in which the growing population is distributed and accommodated throughout the District and whether it should be primarily provided for within the villages, and/or within the main towns, and/or the rural and coastal areas. This includes placing emphasis on delivering capacity to the towns and villages to provide for the majority of growth.

Dispersed countryside living and increasing population also impact upon the existing villages. Community facilities, clubs and societies, and local businesses can be affected positively, through increased patronage. However, the typical form of dispersed countryside living makes no contribution to the necessary public infrastructure of village communities. Instead of creating the economies of scale for the development and upgrade of public infrastructure, dispersed countryside living more often perpetuates adverse environmental effects that arise from inadequate infrastructure. There is a need to provide for appropriate levels of growth within the villages while avoiding adverse effects upon their coastal and rural character.

- *Servicing*

Dispersed countryside living is contributing to the increasing pressure on the District's roads and services and on New Zealand's energy resources. In particular this has meant that roads that were quite adequate for a dispersed, farming population now require upgrading and more frequent maintenance to satisfy new expectations. The need to inter-relate land use patterns and transport facilities is emphasised in the Local Government Auckland Amendment Act 2004.

There has also been an increasing demand for urban type services such as refuse collection, water supply, stormwater management and waste water management.

- *Countryside Living and Environmental Enhancement*

A considerable level of growth (approximately 50%) has occurred in the wider rural and coastal areas outside the towns and villages in the last two decades. Previous Plans have provided little opportunity for village growth to occur outside the three main towns.

In the rural areas growth has primarily occurred in two ways. Firstly the take up of vacant lots created previously under the auspices of horticultural purposes, and secondly, lots created for 'general purpose' or through the protection of indigenous vegetation. These lots are dispersed throughout the District with no account taken of locational effects or how best to manage dispersed countryside living across the District.

It is clear there is continuing demand for countryside living. There has also been limited success in gaining significant environmental enhancement from rural subdivision. In previous Plans the former subdivision provisions were not directed to areas where demand and pressure for countryside living are greatest or where threats to the environment and the need for enhancement is greatest.

There is a need to provide for some directed but limited levels of growth within rural and coastal areas. This should only occur where there is a clear environmental gain and where provision is managed in an integrated manner that avoids, remedies or mitigates adverse effects and does not undermine the role of the towns and villages and avoids the proliferation of lots across the District. In addition, the impacts of development on existing vacant lots needs to be addressed in conjunction with the subdivision method.

Regional and District Growth Strategies

The Auckland Regional Growth Strategy: 2050 has been developed by the Auckland councils to give direction to addressing the effects of growth, including effects on the rural and coastal areas of the Auckland Region. This approach is reflected in the Auckland Regional Policy Statement. Franklin District Council has also adopted the Franklin District Growth Strategy 2051. This policy document's purpose is to guide future management of growth for the District. This replaces the previous 1999 District Growth Management Approach.

Growth Management Approach

Consistent with the Auckland and Waikato Regional Policy Statements, and having regard to the Franklin District Growth Strategy, growth should be managed through a hierarchical approach as follows:

- Accommodate the majority of growth within the three main towns (Pukekohe, Waiuku and Tuakau) and identified key villages (Clarks Beach, Kingseat, Pokeno, Buckland, Patumahoe), through consolidation and expansion where appropriate.
- Provide for additional growth outside the main towns and key villages within the District's other villages¹, through managed expansion.

¹ Note: A full list of villages is contained in Part 17B.3.

- Provide growth through the creation of villages around existing nodes in areas of the District where there is high residential demand and where existing village capacity is limited (Karaka, Karaka South and Te Hihi).
- Provide for a dedicated rural countryside living zone in the vicinity of Runciman. This shall be undertaken in a comprehensive manner.
- Provide for limited countryside living in rural and coastal zones predominantly through an identified environmental enhancement overlay area where:
 - significant environmental enhancement occurs,
 - adverse effects on rural and coastal character are avoided, remedied or mitigated,
 - land parcels are of sufficient size to absorb and manage adverse effects within the site,
 - cumulative effects of existing latent capacity (vacant lots) are taken into account,
 - the wide dispersal of lots is avoided,
 - reverse sensitivity effects are addressed in a manner that does not compromise the viability of rural lots for continued production, including mineral extraction.

This growth strategy seeks to address adverse impacts upon the rural environment and recognises the broader regional strategic growth directions.

The issues are fully discussed under Parts:

- 16 Rural and Coastal Issues
- 16.1 Introduction to Issues
- 16.2 Managing Growth in the Rural and Coastal Areas
- 16.3 Sustainability of Natural Resources

3A.2 GROWTH OF TOWNS AND VILLAGES

Many of Franklin's towns have high potential for future growth, both within the existing urban zones and on the periphery of these zones. It is important that such growth is managed, particularly with regard to the life supporting capacity of soils, sensitive landscapes and wildlife habitats.

Franklin's people benefit from the versatility of the District's land resources, the District's ecological diversity, and safe, pleasant and convenient living and working places. Future generations can expect to enjoy these resources as well.

All towns and villages need to be managed in a way that properly addresses these issues, without unreasonably constraining growth.

These issues are fully discussed under:

- 16.2.2.1 Existing Communities and Settlements
- 18 Urban Issues

PART 3B SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE NATURAL AND PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

3B.1 SUSTAINABILITY, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The ongoing sustainability of the land, soil and water resources of the District is a central resource management issue. These resources are important for rural production and should be managed to ensure that their life supporting capacity is safeguarded.

Maintaining the life supporting capacity of soils, avoiding further degradation and improving water bodies and riparian habitats and recognising and encouraging the distinctive natural environments of the District are also matters to be addressed.

Throughout the District, there are many waterways, areas of native vegetation, coastal environments, and riparian margins that have been lost and degraded through past land management practices, use and development. The remaining 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. In order to recognise these important functions there is a need to protect and enhance remnants of indigenous vegetation and habitat of indigenous fauna.

These smaller areas can be restored and enhanced by fencing, planting, and protection. Council and the Regional Councils undertake a limited range of activities to address such protection. An additional and effective means of achieving a significant level of protection and enhancement is to provide, in identified areas, a directed and integrated subdivision opportunity for countryside living as an incentive where permanent environmental protection and enhancement work is undertaken. This is subject to avoiding a proliferation of dispersed lots for countryside living across the District and in association with methods that aim to better consolidate latent potential.

In this manner the demand for countryside living can be satisfied at an appropriate location and in a way that makes a positive contribution to the natural environment.

This incentive must be carefully managed to ensure that such countryside living lots do not undermine the protection and enhancement of the environment and will not result in adverse effects upon rural and coastal character, and other adverse effects. Transfer of rural lot building entitlements can offer a mechanism for reducing such impacts and avoiding cumulative effects. However such transfers must also be designed to avoid promoting a proliferation of development in sensitive locations, in particular the coastal environment and to direct new growth to identified suitable locations.

These issues are fully discussed under:

- 16.3 Sustainability of Natural resources
- 16.4 Environmental Enhancement, Biodiversity and the Protection and Enhancement of Natural Features
- Part 5 Conservation of Natural Features

3B.2 COASTAL ENVIRONMENT

The District has an extensive and variable coastline. The West Coast adjoins the Tasman Sea and is a rugged stretch of largely undeveloped coastline. The East Coast adjoining the Firth of Thames is a broad, flat coastal plain with several villages and incorporates the Hauraki Gulf coastal marine area. The Manukau Harbour Coastline has a considerably varied coastal environment with a number of villages and more intensive rural subdivision.

Coastal environment issues include:

- Coastal hazards including erosion, flooding and wind together with rising sea levels, however hazard protection measures have environmental costs.
- Degradation of critical coastal margins caused by human activities adversely impacting on important natural biological and physical systems.
- Loss of natural coastal character as a result of development, which would threaten a number of very significant areas and features.
- Opportunities for public access to and along the coast vary considerably and while such opportunities could be improved it is also necessary to restrict access in some locations to protect important and sensitive bird habitats.

These issues are discussed under:

- 16.5 Sustainable Management of the Coastal Environment
- Part 5 Conservation of Natural Features
- Part 7 Natural Hazards

3B.3 LAND MANAGEMENT

Some primary production activities that directly rely upon a resource also have great potential to damage that resource. For example, cropping relies upon soil and water resources. Depending on the management practices used, this activity can cause soil erosion, loss of soil structure, and pollution of water resources. Agricultural and horticultural practices need to avoid, remedy or mitigate these effects if they are to be considered sustainable.

All persons have a statutory duty, which is reinforced in this Plan, to avoid, remedy and mitigate any adverse effect on the environment. (See *Section 17* of the Act, and Part 14 of the Plan.)

These issues are discussed under:

- 16.3 Sustainability of Natural Resources
- Part 7 Natural Hazards

3B.4 CONSERVATION

The effects of a number of activities, including new development, are damaging and in some cases destroying the landscape, natural features and cultural heritage of the District. Some of the natural and cultural features are of district, regional, national and international importance. The Plan recognises the need to protect existing indigenous vegetation and habitats, and measures are included to guide indigenous vegetation and habitat removal.

These issues are discussed under:

- Part 5 Conservation of Natural Features
- Part 7 Natural Hazards

3B.5 WAIKATO RIVER

The natural values of the Waikato River are being compromised in a number of ways. Increasingly the river is subject to pressure from competing interests.

An integrated management approach is needed to effectively deal with the issues facing the Waikato River. The various agencies responsible for the management of the river need to work in unison.

These issues are discussed under:

- Part 6 Waikato River

3B.6 MANUKAU HARBOUR

The Manukau Harbour, while not within Franklin District, forms a large part of Franklin's northern boundary. Land use activities occurring within the District have the potential to impact upon the Harbour. As well the Council will take an interest in all matters pertaining to the Harbour in recognition of its importance to the people of Franklin.

These issues are discussed under:

- Part 5.1.5 The Coastal Environment

3B.7 HAURAKI GULF

The Hauraki Gulf coastal marine area has been subject to specific legislation that recognises the national significance of this environment. The Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000 defines a catchment boundary for the Hauraki Gulf that includes the Firth of Thames coastal margin of the District. Land use activities occurring within the District have the potential to impact upon the Firth of Thames and the wider Hauraki Gulf, while marine activities can affect the coastal area. In that regard the Act recognises the interrelationship between the Hauraki Gulf, its islands and catchments and the ability of that interrelationship to sustain the life supporting capacity of the environment of the Hauraki Gulf - and its islands - as matters of national significance. Accordingly, an integrated approach to managing the cross boundary issues is needed. As a consequence Council has obligations under the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act in meeting its responsibilities under the RMA.

These issues are discussed under:

- Part 5.1.5 The Coastal Environment
- Part 7 Natural Hazards

3.B.8 RENEWABLE ENERGY

The use of fossil fuels for energy is recognised as a contributing factor to global climate change. The District's dependence on unsustainable energy sources, in particular fossil fuels is a significant issue in terms of long-term sustainability. The District needs to recognise and provide for the development of renewable energy sources, including wind, solar, hydro, tide, biogas and biomass etc (subject to acceptance of their locational factors and environmental impacts).

3C OTHER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

3C.1 PARTNERSHIP WITH TANGATA WHENUA

The principles of the Treaty of Waitangi must be taken into account by the District Council in fulfilling its resource management role. The relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, waahi tapu, and other taonga shall be recognised and provided for.

These issues are discussed under:

- Part 4 Partnership with Tangata Whenua

and further objectives are contained in Part 4.1.2.

In addition various parts of the Plan contain specific assessment criteria related to Tangata Whenua issues.

3C.2 MAJOR INDUSTRY

There are some major industrial activities in rural parts of the District, notably the Glenbrook Steel Mill. These activities make an important contribution to the social and economic well-being of the people and communities of the District and can have significant effects on the natural environment. There continues to be great potential for conflict between these and other existing industries and surrounding land uses.

To a large extent past controls have focused on activities at the expense of controlling effects and without necessarily addressing all the effects or cumulative impacts. The Act has caused all people, including major industries, to become more aware of the effects of their activities. Industry has introduced self-regulation and monitoring in recognition of its obligations and in order to minimise the risk of significant penalties and liabilities provided under the Act. The Council intends to build on this co-operative attitude as a cost-effective way of managing the effects of 'advanced' industrial activities, for which it shares a statutory resource management function with Regional Councils.

Council is also aware of the need to avoid, remedy or mitigate any adverse effect that may arise as a result of providing opportunities for countryside living in areas near established major industries. Notably the District Plan addresses reverse sensitivity issues in this respect, by providing assessment criteria and performance standards to ensure the activities of established major industrial activities in the rural and coastal areas are recognised and not unduly restricted by subdivision and development.

These issues are discussed under:

Part 17C.3 Managing Conflicts and Amenities in Rural and Coastal Areas
Part 20 Other Issues

3C.3 MINERALS

Franklin District's proximity to Auckland, its largely rural makeup and its favourable geology ensures that there is a continual high level of interest in the District's mineral resources. Much of this resource is vital to the District's and Region's industries and infrastructure. Mineral resources are fixed in location and can be compromised by inappropriate development, which can potentially leave some mineral deposits inaccessible.

Given the sensitivity of the mineral extraction industry it is not easy to accurately define the extent or quality of mineral resources from a commercial viability perspective. Therefore it is necessary for the Council to adopt a precautionary approach to this issue to ensure the accessibility of these resources now and for future generations and to ensure that the effects of exploration and extraction can be addressed.

These issues are discussed under:

16.3.3 Accessibility of Mineral Resources
17C.3 Managing Conflicts
21.6 Objectives – Mineral Resources

3.C.4 Other Relevant Sections

For other relevant sections refer to:

Part 8 Cultural Heritage
Part 9 Transportation
Part 10 Financial Contributions
Part 11 Recreation and Reserves.
Part 15 Activities Throughout the District

3D DISTRICT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The following **District Wide Strategic Objectives** are adopted to address the key issues of

- managing the effects of growth
- sustainably managing the natural and physical environment including enhancement

The District's Strategic Objectives:

Sustainable Management of Natural and Physical Environment

1. To protect, restore and enhance the natural, physical and cultural resources of the District; while enabling the utilisation of such resources in an environmentally sustainable manner.
2. To provide for the sustainable use and management of highly valued land, including the life supporting capacity of soils, to ensure the productive potential, versatility and accessibility.

Growth Management

Towns and Villages

3. To provide for the majority of growth, within or as an extension to, existing and planned towns and villages in a structured manner that supports nodal growth;
4. To provide directed and managed residential opportunities associated with the villages in a manner that reduces pressure to develop rural land and supports existing and planned villages;
5. Towns and villages should generally be managed in a flexible way to provide for a wide range of activities.

Rural and Coastal

6. To provide limited, directed, integrated and managed countryside living opportunities predominantly through:
 - a dedicated rural countryside living zone in the vicinity of Runciman which has a rural character and significant environmental benefits;
 - an environmental enhancement overlay area in the rural and coastal zones where there are significant environmental benefits and adverse effects on rural character and amenity are avoided, remedied or mitigated.
7. To manage conflicts between activities in rural and coastal areas in order to avoid, remedy or mitigate adverse effects between activities and facilitate the establishment and continuance of activities dependent on rural resources.

These District Strategic Objectives are given effect to through the Objectives, Policies and Rules contained in:

Part 4 Partnerships with Tangata Whenua (4.1 Objectives, Policies and Methods)

Part 5 Conservation of Natural Features (5.2 Objectives, Policies and Methods)

Part 6 Waikato River (6.2 Objectives, Policies and Methods)

Part 7 Natural Hazards (7.2 Objectives, Policies and Methods, 7.3 Natural Hazard Avoidance and Mitigation)

Part 8 Cultural Heritage (8.1 Objectives, Policies and Methods, 8.2 Criteria for Scheduling Cultural Heritage Resources, 8.3 Heritage Protection)
Part 9 Transportation (9.3 Objectives, Policies and Methods, 9.4 Roading Hierarchy)
Part 10 Financial Contributions (10.1 Objectives, Policies and Methods)
Part 11 Recreation and Reserves
Part 15 Activities Throughout the District
Part 17 Rural and Coastal Objectives, Policies and Methods
Part 19 Objectives, Policies and Methods: Urban
Part 21 Objectives Policies and Methods: Other