

6.3 PROTECTION OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL FEATURES AND LANDSCAPES AND DISTRICT AMENITY LANDSCAPES

6.3.1 BACKGROUND

(1) INTRODUCTION

- (a) Section 6 of the Resource Management Act 1991 identifies “**Matters of National Importance**”, and requires that –

[“... all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, shall recognise and provide for the following matters of national importance:

- (a) The preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment (including the coastal marine area), wetlands, and lakes and rivers and their margins, and the protection of them from inappropriate subdivision, use and development
- (b) The protection of outstanding natural features and landscapes from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.”]

- (b) Section 7 of the Resource Management Act 1991 identifies “**Other Matters**”, and requires that –

[“... all persons exercising functions and powers under it, in relation to managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources, shall have particular regard to:

- (c) the maintenance and enhancement of amenity values”]

- (c) These clauses demonstrate the significance of the visual landscape and natural character and that their management is a requirement of the Act. The Waikato Regional Policy Statement also has policy and methods to protect, enhance and manage landscape values of importance. Councils are therefore required to assess the landscape values of their territorial areas and coastlines, to identify the natural character of the coastal environment, wetlands, lakes and rivers and their margins, and to identify outstanding landscapes.

- (d) In preparing the District Plan, the landscape features of the District have been formally identified and assessed by LA4 Landscape Architects (September 2006) to determine the ‘outstanding’ and ‘amenity’ landscapes. The assessment process subdivided the District’s landscape into landscape units which display reasonably consistent landscape character in terms of land uses, vegetation cover, topography and presence of water bodies or relationship with nearby bodies of water. Each landscape unit was assessed against a number of recognised landscape assessment criteria to provide an overall sensitivity rating. Those landscapes and landscape features with ‘extreme’ or ‘high’ sensitivity have been identified as “Outstanding”. Landscape units with a ‘significant’ sensitivity have been identified as District Amenity Landscapes. These landscapes and landscape features are identified on the Planning Maps.

(2) OUTSTANDING NATURAL LANDSCAPES

- (a) Nationally and regionally important outstanding Landscape Units that have been identified encompass the Coromandel and Kaimai Ranges, the Karangahake Gorge and the Kopuatai and Torehape Peat Domes, and are in the Department of Conservation estate (zoned either Conservation (Indigenous Forest) or Conservation (Wetland)), the Rural Zone (Outstanding Natural Landscape Area), the Karangahake Gorge Zone, and the Reserve (Active) and Reserve (Passive) Zones along parts of the Waitawheta River (refer to Planning Maps N1 to N4).
- (b) The Coromandel and Kaimai Range Landscape Unit is determined by the volcanic mountain ranges which form the basis for it. The ranges form the distinctive backbone to the Coromandel Peninsula and continue south into Hauraki District. The landform varies from rolling hills to steep and deeply incised hill country. With the exception of some of the lower slopes which are used for sheep and cattle grazing, the majority of the land is in native forest with some areas of pine plantation. The viewing audience of the ranges is very large, comprising people travelling on many of the roads and state highways, tourists, trampers, and other recreational users within the range, as well as fishing and sailing people out to the east. The ranges are also visible to many people in settlements – for example Paeroa, Ngatea and Whiritoa.
- (c) The Kopuatai and Torehape Peat Domes are located within the Hauraki Plains Landscape Unit, and together comprise an expansive area of wetland. The wetlands have high natural character values as well as being internationally and nationally important for their flora and fauna values. While the viewing audience of the wetlands is limited, these landscape features are extremely rare, and their preservation is considered to be of national importance.
- (d) The Karangahake Gorge Landscape Unit runs from just west of Mackaytown to the western edge of Waikino, and includes the Ohinemuri River and the steep slopes on either side. The landscape character is defined by steep sided rocky gorge cliffs, a rocky river, vegetation (both regenerating indigenous vegetation and exotic vegetation), gold mining relics, the Karangahake Gorge Historic Walkway, the Hauraki Rail Trail and associated amenities, and some man-made elements that have generally blended in well to the natural character of the landscape. Whilst the unit has been modified, it does display in places, quite high natural character values because of the natural geological processes that have created the gorge, the vegetative cover and the distinctive outstanding peaks of Mt Karangahake and Mt Taukane towering above the gorge. The main viewing audiences for this unit are visitors to the gorge, people driving through on State Highway 2 and landowners.

(3) DISTRICT AMENITY LANDSCAPES

- (a) Those landscapes of high visual amenity and natural character identified as District Amenity Landscapes exhibit a unity of elements that give rise to being 'pleasant', aesthetically cohesive, with attributes of 'naturalness'. The extensive exposure of ridgelines/flanks and their general openness and visibility limit their visual absorption capability in parts of these landscapes. Three Landscape Units were identified as District Amenity Landscapes – The Coastal Foothills, the upper foothill slopes of the

Coromandel Range, and the Western Hills (Hapuakohe Range) (refer to Planning Maps N1 to N4).

- (b) The Coastal Foothills Landscape Unit is sited along the east coast of the District and predominantly encompasses land zoned Coastal, with areas of Conservation estate zoned Conservation (Indigenous Forest), the marginal strips along the seaward coastal edge zoned Reserve (Passive), and Marae Development Zone at Mataora Bay. The key elements are the steep and rolling coastal landform with a mixture of native and exotic vegetation, large tracts of pasture extending to the coastal cliff edges and limited man-made development. There are a number of beaches and bays (including Mataora Bay), some with backshore flats, but generally the steep slopes run around the back of these flats and prevail overall. For some stretches of the coastline the land drops straight into the sea in the form of distinctive white and pink cliffs. The headland to the south of Mataora Bay and the Otahu River estuary are also significant landscape features. The visual audience includes boaties and fishermen, people using local roads and the public coastal walkway to Orokawa Bay, and people travelling on State Highway 25.
- (c) The upper foothill slopes of the Coromandel Range Landscape Unit predominately to the north and south of Paeroa, is largely determined by the combination of moderate to steep landform with pasture, some exotic forestry and native forest in gullies and on some of the higher slopes. The foothills are backed by higher landforms covered in native forest. The spatial character ranges from a sense of enclosure in the valleys to an expansive quality on the outward facing flanks and ridgelines which form a backdrop to Paeroa and Waihi.
- (d) The Western Hills comprise both rolling and steep landforms, with a mix of pasture, good quality bush in gullies and along the higher tops, with pine plantations in places and other exotic tree groups on the lower slopes. Buildings are fairly unobtrusive and the prevailing qualities are pasture with bush. The unit forms the western backdrop to the Hauraki Plains with a spatial character that ranges from a sense of enclosure in the valleys to an expansive quality on the outward facing flanks and ridgelines. There are three important hill features in the range – Otane (432m), Maungakawa (535m) and Pukeitonga (512m) which are significant landscape features. The viewing audience includes people travelling on State Highways 25 and 27 and numerous local roads on the Plains and in the ranges themselves, and from the Firth of Thames. This Landscape Unit mostly encompasses land zoned Rural (District Amenity Landscape) with Conservation (Indigenous Forest) Zone applying to the Conservation estate along the upper slopes of the Western Hills.
- (e) The three District Amenity Landscape Units have been modified, with grazing the predominant land use. The rolling contour of the terrain, enclosed valleys and uneven distribution of vegetation provide varying opportunities for successful incorporation of development. By contrast, the sandy coastal bays, open ridges, spurs and flanks of the Coastal Foothills Landscape Unit are very sensitive to development.

(4) OUTSTANDING NATURAL FEATURES

(a) There are also outstanding natural features that contribute to the character of the District which should be recognised in terms of Section 6(b) of the Act. Council has identified a list of areas/features considered to be outstanding and which warrant a level of protection. The features include:

(i) Black Rocks (Taumaharua)

Important visual feature providing a visual backdrop to Paeroa.

(ii) White Rock

Exposed portion of a gold bearing quartz reef. This feature is prominent from State Highway 2 and other points in the Paeroa area.

(iii) Queen's Head

Land form feature near Waikino which resembles the head of Queen Victoria.

(iv) Parakiwai Andesitic Neck

Columnar jointed andesite neck located in a disused quarry at the end of Parakiwai Quarry Road, Otahu Valley.

(v) Whiritoa Blowhole

The most spectacular active blowhole on the Coromandel Peninsula, located in the southern Headland of Whiritoa Beach, which is active during easterly storms. Included within the Coastal Zone.

(vi) Waitawheta Andesitic Columns

Columns of andesite adjoining the Taieri Stream.

(vii) Owharoa Falls

Spectacular waterfall on Taieri Stream. Access is from Waitawheta Road. Included within the Karangahake Gorge Zone.

(viii) Mount Karangahake

Substantial feature at the entrance to the Karangahake Gorge which provides a visual backdrop to Paeroa. The lower slopes are largely in private ownership and partly in pasture. The summit area is in regenerating forest and scrub and is administered by the Department of Conservation. Majority included within the Conservation (Indigenous Forest) Zone.

(ix) Mount Taukane

Substantial feature within the Karangahake Gorge at the confluence of the Ohinemuri and Waitawheta Rivers, with sheer rock faces rising from the rivers. The land is administered by the Department of Conservation, and is included in the Conservation (Indigenous Forest) Zone.

6.3.2 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- (1) Outstanding natural features and landscapes and landscapes of District significance may be adversely affected or degraded as a result of inappropriate land use and subdivision activities.
- (2) Large parts of the Coromandel Range, and the Kopuatai and Torehape Peat Domes, have been identified as outstanding landscapes. Some activities within these outstanding landscapes have the potential to adversely affect their scenic and natural landscape qualities.
- (3) The area/feature which is probably most susceptible to damage is the Karangahake Gorge Corridor, identified as a landscape of high district significance. The removal of existing vegetation (indigenous or otherwise) would have a significant and detrimental effect on the scenic quality of the area. The Department of Conservation and Council are developing the Karangahake Walkway/Cycleway as a tourist attraction, including developing the concept of a heritage trail focusing on past mining activities. The visual quality of the area should be maintained and enhanced to augment the walkway/cycleway experience and the scenic highway experience.
- (4) Areas of the eastern coastal foothills, the upper foothill slopes of the Coromandel Range and the western hills (Hapuakohe Range) have high visual amenity and natural character values of District significance that contribute to the amenity and character of the District and which could be adversely affected by inappropriate layout of lifestyle subdivision and the location and design of development.

6.3.3 OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

(1) OBJECTIVE 1

Protect the integrity and the aesthetic, cultural and intrinsic values of outstanding natural features and landscapes and maintain the high cultural and visual amenity values of District Amenity Landscapes.

(a) Policies

Objective 1 will be achieved by the implementation of the following policies:

- (i) Control the subdivision, use and development of land so that the adverse effects on aesthetic and intrinsic values and on the visual and physical integrity of outstanding landscapes and natural features are avoided, remedied or mitigated.
- (ii) To maintain as far as practicable, the elements, features and patterns that contribute to the quality of District Amenity Landscapes through the careful location of lifestyle subdivision and building development, and the use of appropriate building materials and colour.
- (iii) To ensure the significant natural coastal environment features and coastal environment landscapes are preserved and protected from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

- (iv) To encourage and provide for appropriate development which will remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of past land uses and enhance the natural character and amenity values of the coastal environment.

(b) Reasons

- (i) Inclusion of those outstanding natural features and landscapes in the Conservation (Indigenous Forest) and Conservation (Wetland) Zones will provide a reasonable measure of protection, given the relatively limited level of threat they are considered to be exposed to.
- (ii) The Coastal Zone provisions recognise the legislative imperative for the protection of the coastal environment.
- (iii) The Karangahake Gorge Zone is required to ensure that changes in land use do not adversely affect visual amenity.
- (iv) Rules in the Rural Zone will protect both outstanding landscapes (Outstanding Natural Landscape Area), and landscapes of District significance (District Amenity Landscape Area), from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

6.3.4 ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS

- (1) Recognition of the significant ecological, landscape, amenity and heritage values of the District and facilitation of the protection and enhancement of these features and areas.

6.3.5 ACTIVITIES

Any resource consent applications required under Rule 6.3.5 shall be exempt from Resource Consent Application processing fees.

6.3.5.1 EXCEPTIONS

(1) CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE UNDERLYING ZONE PROVISIONS PREVAIL

- (a) The following *rules* only apply where an activity has, or is likely to have, any actual or potential effect on the visual or structural integrity of the Outstanding Natural Features. Where activities do not involve alteration, disturbance, destruction or removal of an Outstanding Natural Feature, then the underlying *zone* provisions override the following *rules* and should be referred to, although the objectives and policies of Section 6.3 will remain relevant.

6.3.5.2 PERMITTED ACTIVITIES

- (1) The following land management practices are *Permitted Activities* for all features listed in the Schedule of Outstanding Natural Features:

- (a) planting and management of *indigenous vegetation*;
- (b) removal of exotic trees and vegetation;
- (c) pest destruction;
- (d) removal of weed species;
- (e) erection and maintenance of perimeter fencing;
- (f) maintenance of existing tracks and fences.

6.3.5.3 CONTROLLED ACTIVITIES

- (1) There are no *Controlled Activities*.

6.3.5.4 RESTRICTED DISCRETIONARY ACTIVITIES

- (1) There are no *Restricted Discretionary Activities*.

6.3.5.5 DISCRETIONARY ACTIVITIES

- (1) The following are *Discretionary Activities* and shall be assessed in relation to the criteria in Rule 6.3.5.8:
- (a) Any activity not otherwise provided for as a *Permitted Activity* that will alter the visual value of the following listed features in 6.3.6 Schedule of Outstanding Natural Features:
 - (i) ONF5 Mt Karangahake
 - (ii) ONF6 Mt Taukane.

6.3.5.6 NON COMPLYING ACTIVITIES

- (1) Any activity not provided for as a *Permitted, Controlled, Restricted Discretionary, Discretionary or Prohibited Activity* that will result in the alteration or removal of any feature listed in 6.3.6 Schedule of Outstanding Natural Features.

6.3.5.7 PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

- (1) There are no *Prohibited Activities*.

6.3.5.8 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR DISCRETIONARY ACTIVITIES

- (1) The following criteria will be used to assess any application for a *Discretionary Activity*:
- (a) The reasons for inclusion of the feature within the Schedule of Outstanding Natural Features.

- (b) The nature, form and extent of the proposed development, activity, alteration or change and its effect on the aesthetic and intrinsic values of the feature.
- (c) The degree of modification or damage that will be caused to the feature and the extent of any proposed rehabilitation.
- (d) Whether there is a reasonable alternative siting for the proposed development or activity that will result in a nil or lesser impact on the feature.

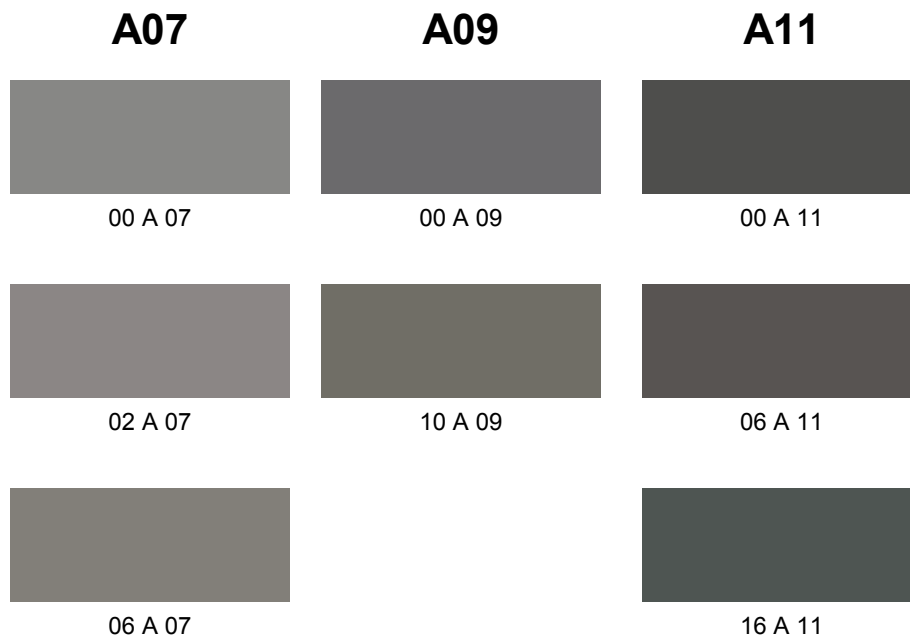
6.3.6 SCHEDULE OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL FEATURES

ITEM NO.	MAP NOS.	FEATURE	FEATURE TYPE	APPROX. LOCATION
ONF1	12	Parakiwai Andesitic Neck	Unusual Geological Feature	Parakiwai Quarry Road, Whangamata
ONF2	23	Black Rocks (Taumaharua)	Visual	Hills northeast of Paeroa
ONF3	H3	Owharoa Falls	Visual	Adjacent to intersection of State Highway 2 and Waitawheta Road, Karangahake Gorge
ONF4	H3	Waitawheta Andesitic Columns	Unusual Geological Feature	Adjacent to intersection of State Highway 2 and Waitawheta Road, Karangahake Gorge
ONF5	29	Mt Karangahake	Visual	DOC Reserve, Karangahake Gorge
ONF6	29, H1, H2	Mt Taukane	Visual	Between Waitawheta and Ohinemuri Rivers, Karangahake Gorge
ONF7	H1	White Rocks	Visual	Karangahake Gorge (above Karangahake School)
ONF8	30	Queen's Head	Visual	State Highway 2 (between Waikino & Waihi)
ONF9	E	Whiritoa Blow Hole	Unusual Geological Feature	South end of Whiritoa Beach
ONF10	18	Whakamoehau Peak	Cultural	North of Golden Cross

6.3.7 HAURAKI DISTRICT COUNCIL LANDSCAPE COLOUR CHART

British Standard Colour Chart - BS5252 (extract)

Colours are copied and will differ from original colour. This is an indication only and the British Standard Colour Chart - BS5252 needs to be referred to.



B21



04 B 21

B23



04 B 23

B25



04 B 25

B27



18 B 27



08 B 21



08 B 23



10 B 25



22 B 27



10 B 21



10 B 23



12 B 25



12 B 21



12 B 23



22 B 25



22 B 21



18 B 23



22 B 23

C37



10 C 37



14 C 37



16 C 37



18 C 37



20 C 37

C39



04 C 39



06 C 39



08 C 39



10 C 39



12 C 39



14 C 39



20 C 39