

Rural Subdivision and Development

Design Guidelines

MAY 2012



Te Kaitiaki-a-Rohe o Ngāmotu

NEW PLYMOUTH DISTRICT COUNCIL
newplymouthnz.com



Rural Subdivision and Development Design Guidelines



The open spaciousness of the rural environment in the foreground of Mount Taranaki from near the intersection of Plymouth and Koru Roads.

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Purpose

The rural areas of New Plymouth District have been shaped by the uses that locate there. The unique Taranaki landscape and its related land-uses have resulted in a distinct rural character. These design guidelines encourage subdivision and development to be undertaken in a way that maintains the rural character of New Plymouth District.

Maintaining rural character in the long term will ensure that spaciousness and low density uses dominate and are not overshadowed by more urban uses, e.g. stand-alone residential living. This will ensure the qualities that make the rural area unique and attractive and therefore competitive from a district-wide perspective are retained.

The New Plymouth District Plan manages the effects of activities undertaken in the rural areas of the district. It provides the standards and rules that need to be adhered to before development can occur. Refer to Appendix One for a summary of the District Plan requirements in relation to the recent rural character plan change.

These design guidelines are non-statutory. They do not have to be complied with, but are offered to assist those involved in subdivision and development to achieve environmental outcomes that often exceed minimum District Plan requirements. These design guidelines have benefited from developer and community representatives feedback and are intended to facilitate high-quality, design-focused environmental outcomes in the district's rural areas. These design guidelines are in line with best practice around New Zealand while recognising the unique characteristics of New Plymouth District. They will be updated as best practice evolves.

These design guidelines include principles and practical tips that can be applied to any subdivision and development. They are intended for landowners who are considering subdivision and development and for those who work directly in the land subdivision design and development sectors. There are a range of professionals required to give input into a successful rural development. These design guidelines assist with ensuring a consistent starting point with the intention that they be used alongside the District Plan. It is recommended that these design guidelines are considered at the early stages of any subdivision or development process.

As this document is only a guide and proposes considerations and actions outside the District Plan requirements, potential subdividers and developers should always obtain expert advice when contemplating subdivision and development in the rural area.

New Plymouth District Boundary



New Plymouth District is predominantly composed of rural land with different characteristics depending on the combination of topography, soils, vegetation, aesthetic and historic values, the rarity of features and forms, and its ability to absorb development.

Statutory Context

The activities you undertake on your property may have effects that require a consent from a local government or other body. The key statutory context that governs the sustainable management of natural and physical resources is outlined below. See Appendix One for more detail.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT 1991

Requires regional and local authorities to sustainably manage the effects of activities on natural and physical resources.

Taranaki Regional Policy Statement

TARANAKI REGIONAL COUNCIL

- Regional Plans for Taranaki (Fresh Water Soil and Air)
- Resource Consent Requirements

NEW PLYMOUTH DISTRICT COUNCIL

- New Plymouth District Plan
- Resource Consent Requirements

WATER USE AND EFFECTS ON WATER RESOURCES

Activities likely to require consent: Extracting water from groundwater, changing course of water, building over water courses, activities in water courses (dams etc), erosion control and contaminant discharge.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

- Typical activities that require consent: Bulk and location of buildings, traffic and noise generation, rural character.
- Technical requirements in Code Of Practice for Infrastructure associated with subdivision and development.

DISCHARGE OF CONTAMINANTS

Activities likely to require consent: Disposal of grey water and stormwater, construction of landfills, earthworks, disposal of agricultural contaminants and effluent and discharge to air, e.g. from industrial sites or trade premises.

NON-STATUTORY RURAL SUBDIVISION AND DEVELOPMENT DESIGN GUIDELINES
Set out good design practice (consistent with District Plan provisions). They cover the areas of design and layout, building location, landscaping, services and building appearance.

SOIL DISTURBANCE

Regional and district councils administer consents for soil disturbance. Consent is likely to be required for large-scale roading, tracking and large scale vegetation clearance on steep land and other earthworks depending on the potential effects.

Strategic Importance of the Rural Area

The rural areas of the district frame our cities and towns. Our rural areas provide economic prosperity through primary production (e.g. dairy farming, sheep and beef, horticulture and forestry) and intensive farming (e.g. poultry industry). The rural area is also rich in resources as evidenced by petroleum production and exploration and quarries. There are also other rural industries.

Alongside these uses is a demand to live in the rural area. The bar has been raised for subdivision and development to ensure that the qualities (rural character) that make the rural area what it is, are maintained. To support this approach there is a more design-focused approach to development in the rural area to ensure quality environmental outcomes.

Cultural Values

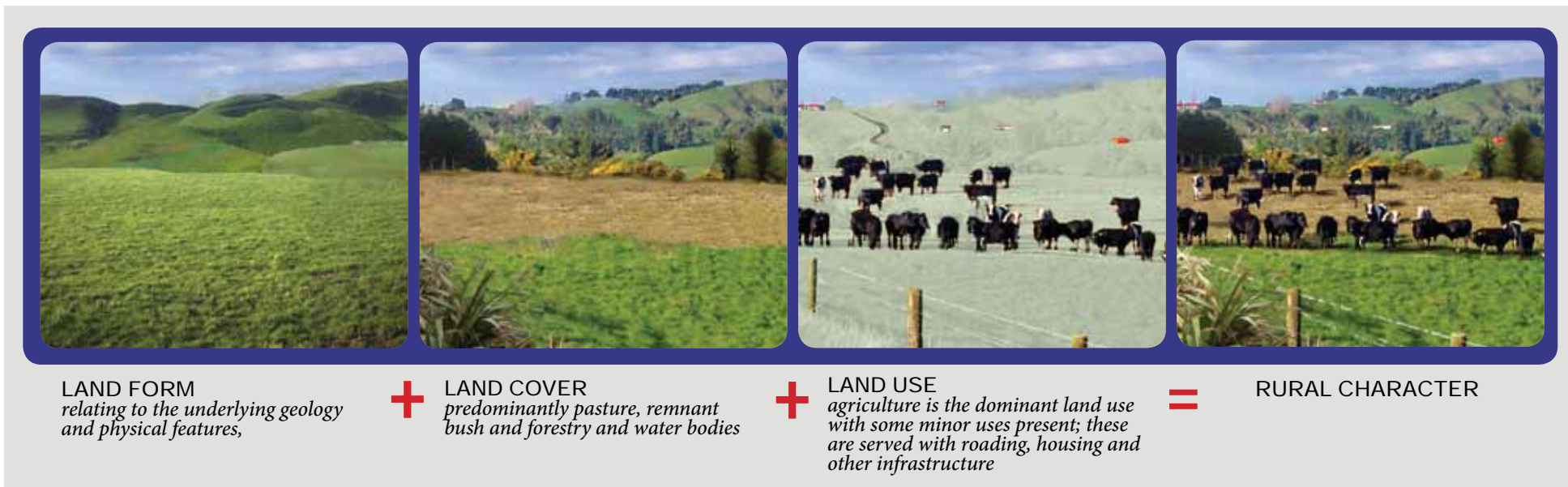
The Maori world view acknowledges that everything in the environment is living, having its own “mauri” or life force. The mauri is often described as the life-force that generates, regenerates and binds the physical and spiritual elements. Maintaining and enhancing the mauri of the natural world is a focus of environmental management. The rural area continues to sustain natural and physical resources closer to their natural state than urban areas, which have been more altered through development.

Tangata whenua have a strong relationship to the rural area and its cultural landscapes. Cultural landscapes can be geographical features which hold cultural and spiritual significance, or wider areas where there has been occupation or relationships. The future management of the rural area and how this impacts on the wider cultural landscape, and also on more geographically defined sites of significance, is important to the relationship of tangata whenua with the land. Sites of significance can include pa sites, urupa and waahi tapu.

Our Landscape

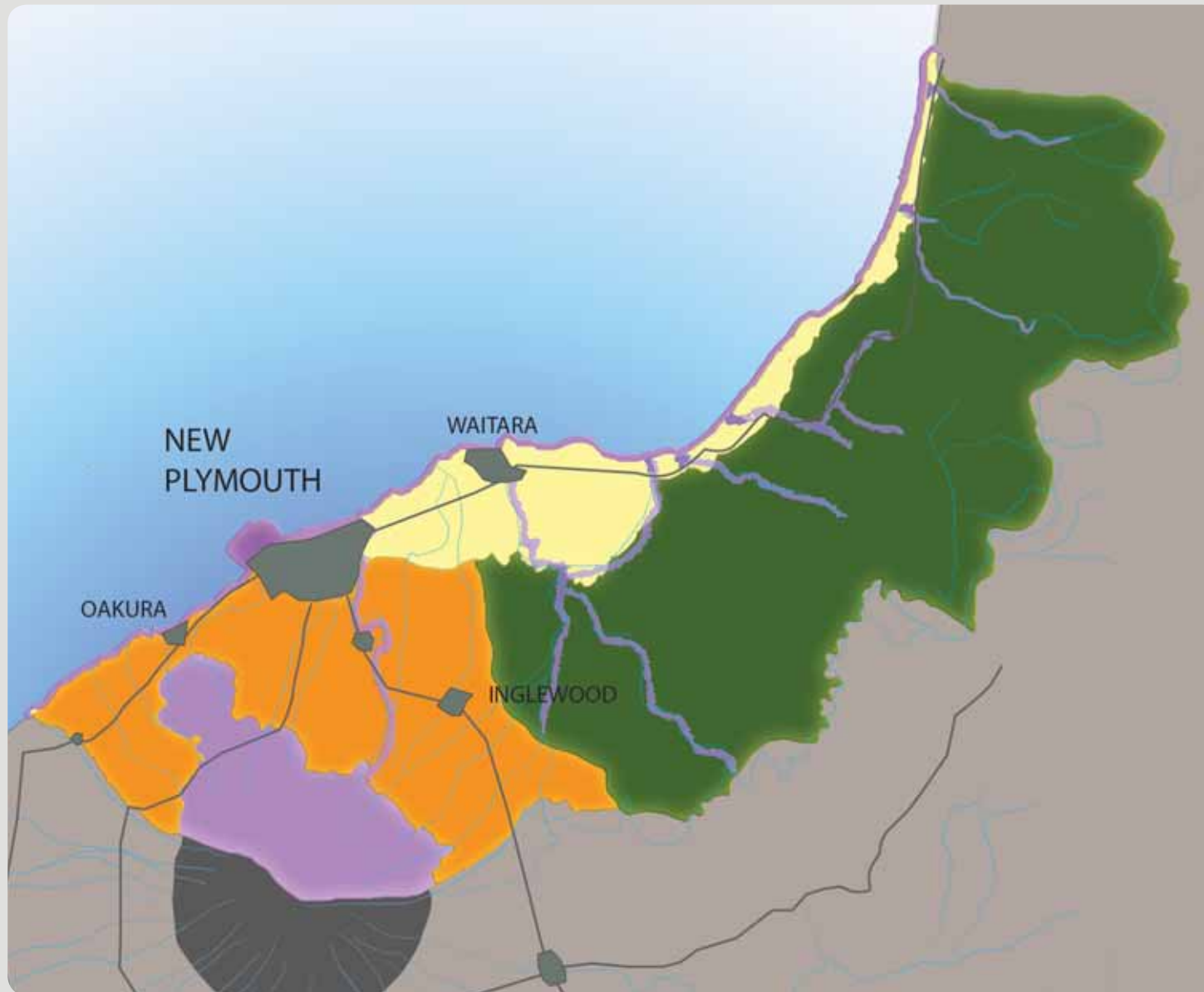
The landscape of New Plymouth District contributes to the particular character of the rural environment. Landscapes are the result of unique combinations of natural and cultural processes. They are dynamic and evolve over time and they are complex, with concepts of memory, perception and tradition interwoven. Landscapes play an important role in shaping the identity of a place. People use landscapes to live, work and play in.

Our landscape is a good example of a landscape that links the mountain to the sea, with varied landscape types and landforms. Extensive monitoring of the change in landscape character has been undertaken (the Council has further reports on landscape assessment and monitoring). The variable composition of rural elements in a landscape produces a rural character which needs to be considered when thinking about subdivision and development of your property. In addition to this, landscape values vary from place to place. The district includes sensitive landscapes with high landscape values identified in these areas, including regard for the ecological, cultural and amenity qualities in the landscape. This results in a landscape that is highly sensitive to change.



Above: Diagram showing the components of rural character that require consideration when thinking about subdivision and development.

Conceptual Land Types



Legend

-  RING PLAIN - MOSTLY ROLLING AND FLAT LAND
-  COASTAL TERRACES AND PLAINS - MOSTLY FLAT WITH SOME ROLLING LAND AND FRONTAL HILL COUNTRY
-  FRONTAL AND EASTERN HILL COUNTRY - HILLY LAND WITH SOME ROLLING AND FLAT LAND IN RIVER VALLEYS
-  IMPORTANT LANDSCAPES AND FEATURES - MOUNT TARANAKI AND THE BUFFER TO THE PARK, COASTAL ENVIRONMENT, MAIN RIVER MOUTHS AND MARGINS.

The district is made up of many different land types. These land types have framed the Design Guidelines to address the particular dominant land types in the rural environment based on rural character. Three distinct landscape types have been identified for the Design Guidelines as follows: Hilly land, rolling land and flat land. These are primarily determined by the land form, with land cover and geographical location also contributing. The district is punctuated with important natural landscapes and features that are sensitive to change and development. Subdivision, development and other land use in and adjacent to these landscapes may need to be approached in different ways, e.g. development in sensitive landscapes requires very careful planning and design to manage effects.

Land Types

1. Rolling land

Rolling land is typically located in the ring plain area and at times varies from gently undulating to steeper land. There are very exposed parts, particularly framing Mount Taranaki and the ranges and in coastal areas. The land varies in productive potential and is typically used for farming purposes. Undulating land provides the opportunity for development to be tucked into the landscape. There is rolling land around New Plymouth City and other small towns.



Key Features

LANDSCAPE VALUES - Streams with planted margins meandering through structured green pasture creates a strong, distinct pattern. Attractive views across lower slopes of mountain to coast. Many pa sites.

PHYSICAL ELEMENTS - Predominantly fertile land, grazing and forestry more common in north. Notable lahar mounds east of Inglewood.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE - Average as development can be accommodated in sympathy with the landforms. Above average on elevated areas near the mountain that are visible from many vantage points throughout the district.

Left: Barrett Road.

2. Flat land

The flat land is generally found in parts of the ring plain and the coastal flats. This land is sensitive to development as it is very open, giving a strong impression of spaciousness. The land has good productive potential and is typically used for farming purposes with some horticulture uses. Low densities of well-designed development is better suited in these flatter landscapes.

Key Features

LANDSCAPE VALUES - open pasture; expansive views; less bush cover.

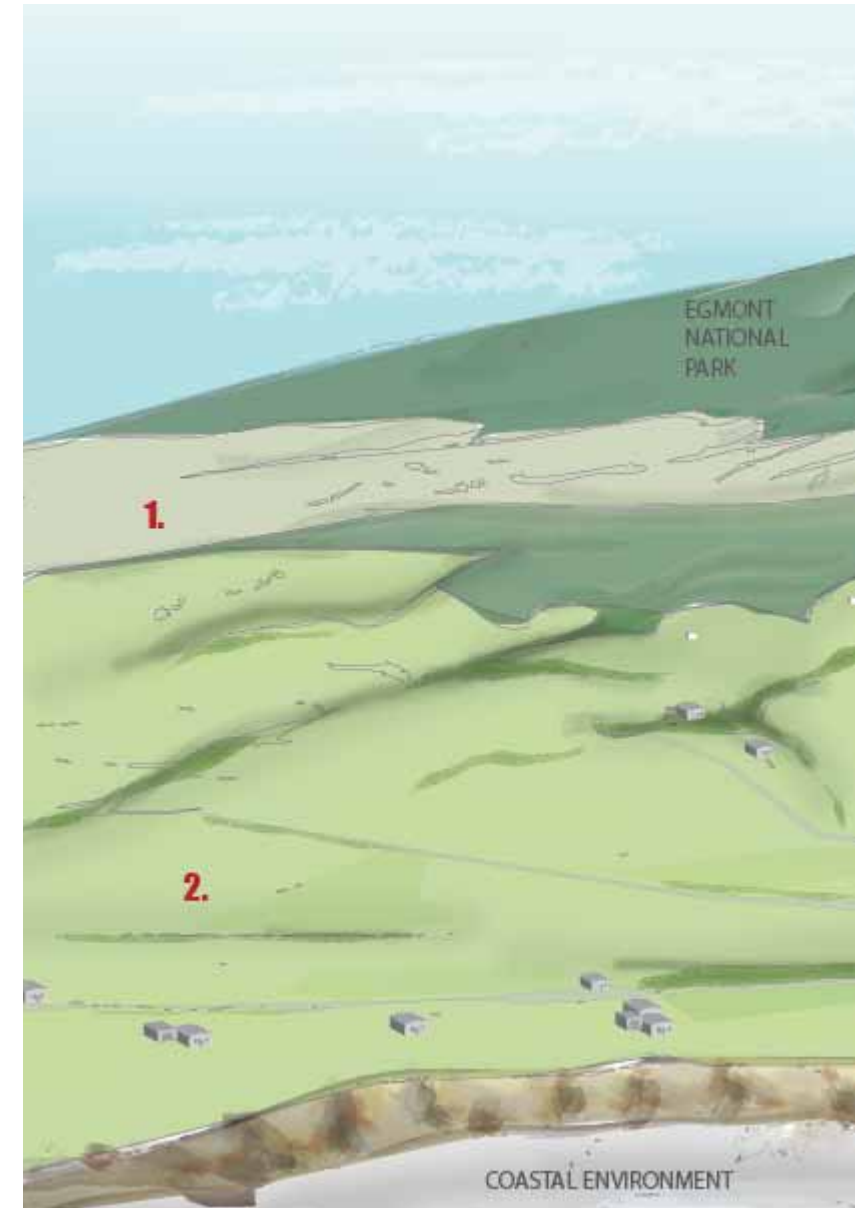
PHYSICAL ELEMENTS - Includes coastal flats and parts of the ring plain. Fertile, productive land is predominant. Often flat land is dissected with streams that carve deeply into soft volcanic soils.

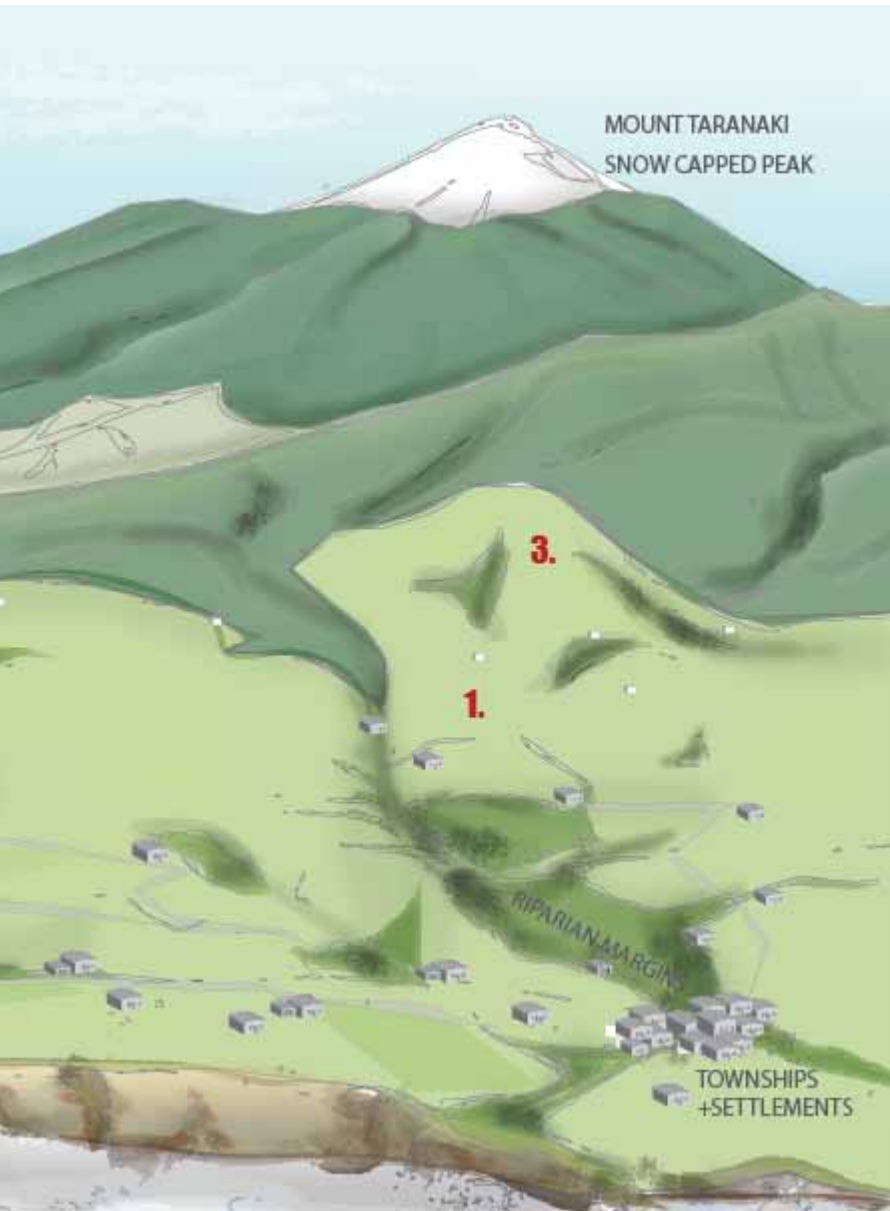
SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE - Above average due to the high visibility of development in flat land with limited vegetation.



Above: Otaraoa Road

New Plymouth District Rural Land Types





3. Hilly land



Above Top: Upstream from Okau Bridge
Above Bottom: Mohakatino Valley

Left, Centre Page: Diagrammatic sketch illustrating New Plymouth District land types and features. Sensitive landscapes are adjacent to the mountain, coastal environment, some riparian margins and settlements.

There is some hilly land on the upper slopes of the ring plain as labelled. The dominant area of hilly land is located to the north and north-east of the district (not shown in the diagram on the right - refer to the map on page 7 for clarification). These areas are typically bush clad, or otherwise marginal land used for less intensive farming. The land is less productive and is often isolated from main settlements. Hilly land is more difficult to access than other areas. The angular steep slopes in combination with the soil characteristics means some hilly land is prone to erosion.

Key Features

LANDSCAPE VALUES - Significant bush cover in parts. Dry stock and forestry more prevalent than in other areas. Relatively remote with low degree of settlement.

PHYSICAL ELEMENTS - Landform is peaked and angular with cliffs and erosion in many places. There is more bush cover in eastern parts.

SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE - Mixed-use areas of hilly land have average sensitivity to change, while bush-covered areas are more sensitive to change due to development standing out amongst otherwise homogenous bush cover.

Sensitive Landscapes

Sensitive landscapes are highly valued and contribute significantly to the district's shared identity. The effects of subdivision and development in these landscapes can be magnified as they are highly sensitive to change.

Sensitive landscapes include:

- The grazed slopes below Mount Taranaki and Egmont National Park. These are open and exposed with a distinct change in vegetation. These slopes form a rural buffer to the bush-covered slopes of the national park, and are more sensitive to development as they can be seen from afar due to their elevation. Views of the mountain from the district are highly valued by all.
- The main vegetated rivers, streams and associated valleys which radiate from the mountain and fall towards the sea.
- The coast and river mouths. These represent diverse ecologically sensitive landscapes and include cliff areas and sandy/rocky beaches. Views and access to these areas is part of the communities local character.
- Mount (Maunga) Taranaki which holds special value for tangata whenua. Maori view the maunga as a living ancestor and it is a source of their identity, belonging and continuity. This makes views to the maunga from the district of particular importance to tangata whenua.
- The coastal environment. This area is also of special significance to tangata whenua due to the intensive occupation by Maori historically. This is evidenced by the large number of sites of significance in this locality.

Subdivision and development in sensitive landscapes require careful planning, smart architectural design and skillful choice of building materials, colour and landscaping to make best use of the important resource and limit the environmental effects on these highly valued landscapes. Generally, development would be expected to be of a lower density and design guidance will apply to a greater degree. Development near or adjacent to these sensitive landscapes should take into account the special landscape values present and respond considerately. Further information on sensitive landscapes is included in the District Plan.



Above: Pukeiti lookout - Spacious, low-density, vegetated, sensitive landscape.



Above: Mohakatino Estuary.



Above: Mount Taranaki and the rural buffer in the foreground.



Above: View of Oakura River from Te Koru Pa.

Rural Character

The District Plan seeks to maintain the rural character of New Plymouth District's rural areas. Rural character is defined as the combination of elements that make an area "rural" rather than "urban".

In particular, key elements have been identified to show the types of activities and therefore environmental results that you would expect in the rural environment. Subdivision and development in the rural area needs to recognise these elements to ensure that rural character can be maintained. The elements are summarised below. (Refer to the District Plan for a full description of the elements of rural character.)

Sensitive landscapes add another layer of meaning to the rural character of a place. They are considered sensitive because the effect of change in these landscapes can be magnified through disruption of the environment or values that people place on these environments. These landscapes require particular attention when considering subdivision or development.

Rural Character Elements

Spaciousness The open spaces in the rural environment due to flat or rolling land form, and land use such as pastoral farming, grazing or growing crops.

Low Density Dwellings are expected to be dispersed in the wider landscape with limited life style opportunities

Working Environment The working land uses lead to environmental effects from rural noises and odours.

Production Orientated The land uses that locate in the rural area that utilise the land productively (e.g. farming).

Rural Based Industry The land uses located in the rural area that support productive land use or are reliant on other natural assets (e.g. petroleum industry).

Vegetated Areas of vegetation including pasture, crops, trees and areas of bush.

Rural Infrastructure Low-level infrastructure supporting rural uses.



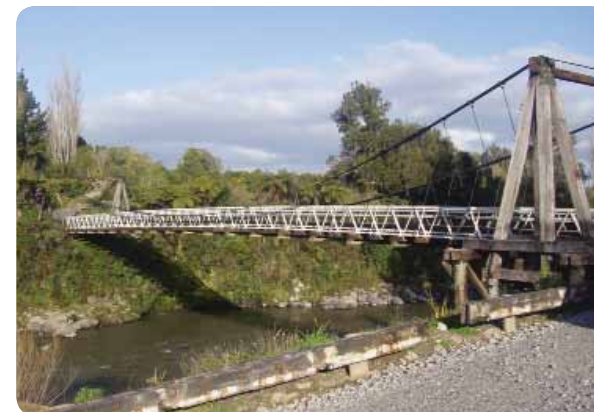
Above: Lincoln Road - Spacious, low density, working environment, production orientated, vegetated.



Above: Waitoetoe Road - Spacious, low density, vegetated, rural infrastructure, sensitive landscape.



Above: Mimi River Valley - Spacious, low density, working environment, production orientated, rural based industry, vegetated, rural infrastructure.



Above: Bertrand Bridge - Working environment, rural infrastructure.

Rural Design Considerations

There are a number of design principles that need to be considered when undertaking subdivision and development.

The different design principles will have varying relevance depending on the site and intention. These design principles provide a starting point for considering how the subdivision or development should proceed. Five topics have been identified as a focus for these design guidelines. In the following section there are a number of design principles and practical tips that can be applied to subdivision and development under each topic area.

Design and Layout

Appropriately designed subdivisions and developments will lead to quality environmental outcomes. There is opportunity through the design and layout of subdivision and development to implement many of the design principles in these design guidelines. However there are also specific design principles and tips that can be considered at the initial stages of subdivision or development.

Building Location

It is important that buildings are positioned to maximise the wide and open spaces in the rural area. The location of a building can impact how it is viewed from afar and within a more localised environment. A number of things can be considered when assessing the most appropriate location for a building.

Landscaping

Landscaping and vegetation can help subdivision and buildings fit into the surrounding environment by providing screening, context and maturity. Where possible, retain existing vegetation. If used inappropriately, fencing can impede views across the rural landscape, vegetation can create prominent artificial lines, and ancillary elements can draw unnecessary attention to a development. It is important that landscaping is considered in its rural context and that styles associated with the urban environment are avoided. A variety of things can be implemented to make features that often accompany a building more sympathetic to their rural surroundings.

Servicing

It is common for services that appear in the urban environment to appear in the rural environment. These services include roads and driveways, pipes and culverts, and walkways and cycleways. The scale of these services, the materials used, where they are placed and their impact on the landform can draw unnecessary attention and emphasise the level of development. However, a number of things can be considered to ensure rural character is maintained when servicing a subdivision or development.

Building Appearance

How a building looks can affect how it fits into the rural environment. A building's size and scale are more influential elements on rural character than some of the other aspects of the building. Well-designed buildings can fit into the rural environment, while designs that are cluttered with a mix of materials are often incompatible with the rural environment. Inappropriate building appearance can divert the focus from the open character of the rural environment. A variety of things can be implemented to make a building's appearance more sympathetic to its rural surroundings.

How to Use These Design Guidelines

The Design Guidelines provide information to assist the development process to achieve high-quality subdivision and development. The following steps are recommended when using these Design Guidelines.

STEP 1

Start with what kind of landscape the land is located in. Is it rolling, or more flat and open? This will determine what the landscape can tolerate and what the appropriate uses might be.

STEP 2

Determine how the activity (e.g. subdivision or industry) can meet the elements of rural character. Is it a rural use or is it more what would be expected in an urban area? Consider the development scoping questions on the right.

STEP 3

Consider the range of professional input you may require. Identify on a plan of your site the essential parameters of the design that are more difficult to change. Try varied layouts that are going to achieve the best outcome in terms of your preference and the design principles.

STEP 4

Focus on the design principles that are more relevant to the landscape and use that is proposed. Some general scoping questions are supplied in the chart to the right that are designed to assist with identifying issues and opportunities for subdivision and development projects.

Development Scoping

RURAL CHARACTER

What elements of rural character does my site display?

TARGET MARKET

What will provide the best economic return? What does the market desire?

MINIMISE SERVICING REQUIREMENTS

What servicing choices will make my development financially efficient and have minimal landscape effects? Consider life time costs of servicing.

NATURAL FEATURES

What vegetation, streams and other elements could I maintain and enhance to increase biodiversity and amenity?

ACCESS

Can I use an existing driveway or road to access my site(s)? Consider the need to provide for safe access and allow for sight lines.

LOCATION OF SITE

Where is my site/building located in relation to neighbouring sites/buildings?

EXPERT ADVICE

Consider what expert advice is required... Valuers, Real Estate Agents, Surveyors, Architects/Designers, Landscape Architects, Engineers, Licensed Building Practitioners.

EARLY DISCUSSIONS

Talk to New Plymouth District Council about development issues in the early stages.

EXISTING HOUSING

What is the best way to subdivide with an existing house on my site?

VISUAL EFFECTS

How do I minimise the visual effect of a dominant house in an open landscape?

BUILDING LOCATION

Where is the best location and orientation for my building so that it is sunny and sheltered with nice views?

BUILDING DESIGN

What building size, scale, proportions, rhythms and materials are present in other surrounding buildings?

LANDSCAPE DESIGN

What plants and materials can I use to increase the financial and ecological value of my site(s)?