

Servicing

It is common for services that exist in the urban environment to exist 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 to them and emphasise the level of development. However, a number of things can be considered when servicing a subdivision or development.

Efficient Servicing

Consider how the subdivision or development can be efficiently serviced.

Tips:

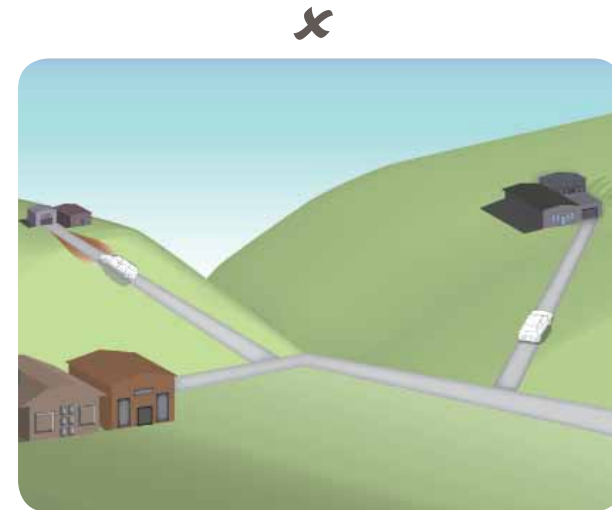
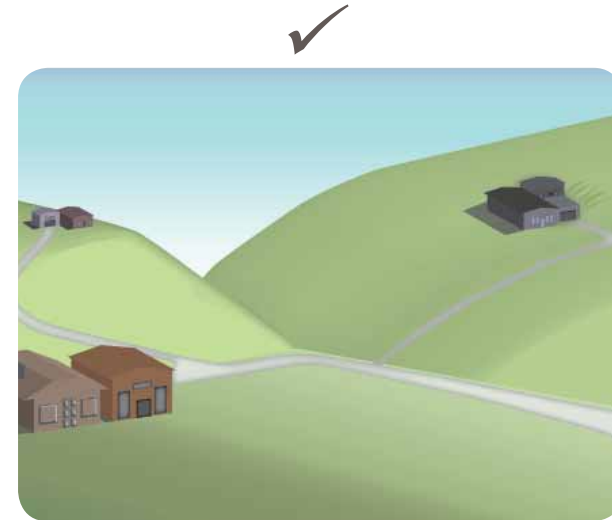
- Consider how close the development is to existing services, e.g. places of work, education, recreation etc.
- Consider the implications of upgrading roads and the availability of other services in the area, e.g. water supply, power, telephone, broadband.
- Consider the availability of emergency services and ensure there is sufficient water supply for fire fighting purposes. (Refer to the current New Zealand Fire Fighting Code of Practice.)
- Consider the efficiency gained by servicing your development from a shared water supply.
- Have realistic expectations on the level of service that it is efficient to provide in the rural environment and plan to accommodate for this, e.g. establish responsible rubbish disposal practices that don't rely on the urban rubbish collection system.

Accessways

Construct roads and driveways so that they follow the contours of the land instead of locating them on prominent ridges and hill faces.

Tips:

- Set accessways back from intersections and the State Highway. See guidance on accessways from the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) <http://www.nzta.govt.nz>
- Where possible, avoid cutting out or filling in large amounts of earth when constructing roads and driveways. If cuts and fills are necessary, these should be blended with the contours of the surrounding land.
- Use planting or existing vegetation to anchor roads and driveways to the land.



Above: Consider ways to minimise the visual and environmental disturbance of earthworks when designing driveways. Earthworks permanently change the landscape. Avoid running lines directly across slopes or on ridgelines.

Accessway Design

Design accessways to reflect the rural environment and the function that they will perform, e.g. a wide, straight, sealed road with kerb and channelling is not necessary if it will only perform the function of an accessway and carry a small volume of traffic.

Tips:

- Use materials such as chip seal or loose road metal which are common in the rural environment. Use materials that are permeable such as gravels and grass. Impermeable materials such as concrete and paving have a more urban character; use these materials sparingly and consider ways of minimising their impact, e.g. dark or neutrally coloured concrete.
- Use techniques that promote traffic safety and lower traffic speed, e.g. narrow, curved accessways encourage slower speeds around housing areas.
- Minimise the length of driveways used in a development by positioning the dwelling and other buildings such as garages and extensions close together.
- Use materials that can be sourced locally to construct driveways. Use light-coloured materials, e.g. lime chip and white concrete, sparingly as they stand out in the rural landscape.
- In the rural environment, street lighting should not be used unless required by traffic legislation - light spill effects decrease the quality of rural character.

Shared Entrances

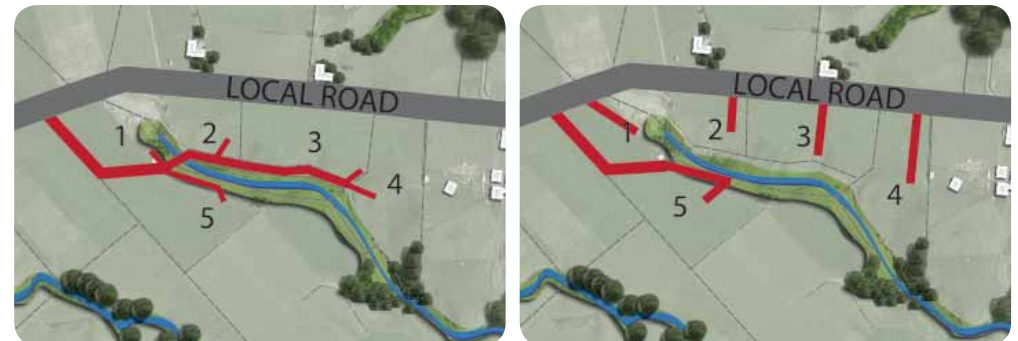
Avoid creating multiple entrances that are spaced closely together, to maintain the character of the rural environment.

Tip:

- Construct one entrance that will service multiple lots.
- The key to successful shared entrances is establishing clear ownership and maintenance responsibilities at the design stage.



Above: Carriageway widths should be as narrow as possible to increase safety and efficiency and control vehicle movement and speeds. Permeable materials like gravel reduce the volume of stormwater.



Above: Shared entrances contribute to open and uncluttered rural character and can also reduce the apparent level of development from public view points.



Above: The House for Karen - narrow gravel entrances provide the necessary infrastructure and fit into the rural landscape well.

Low-Impact Design for Rural Infrastructure

Consider the visual and environmental impact of infrastructure on the rural landscape.

Tips:

- Place services such as electricity underground. If they are required above ground, consider positioning them along established shelter belts or with landform or vegetation in the background, and using timber poles instead of concrete poles.
- Soften the look of on-site stormwater management elements by using swales and rain gardens to collect, direct and soak stormwater runoff instead of using pipes and culverts.
- Where there is a choice, try to avoid placing structures such as water tanks in prominent locations.

Riparian Management

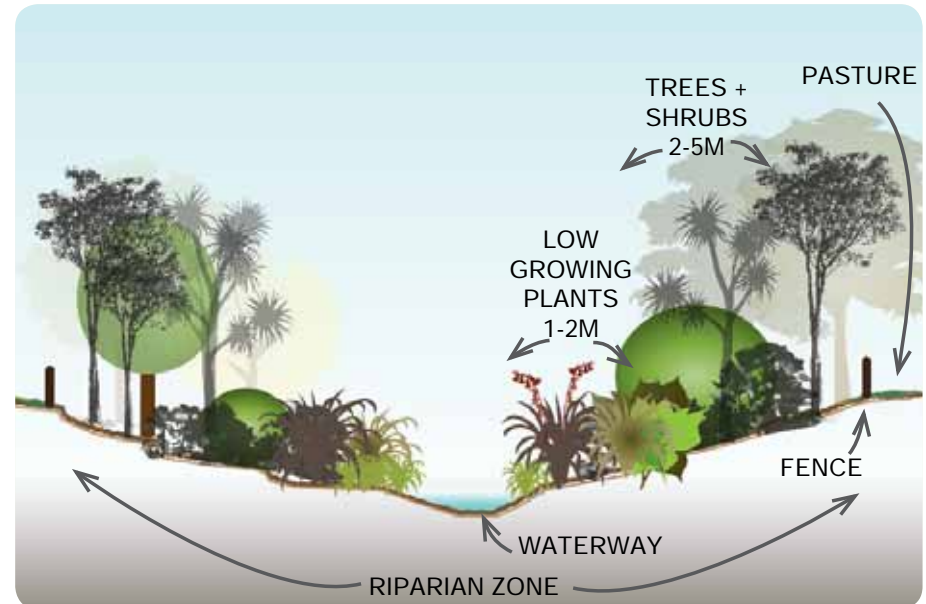
Look for opportunities to conserve and enhance the environment through development with best practice riparian management.

Tips:

- Fence off natural waterways from stock to protect and enhance water quality and aquatic habitat. A standard fence design of a six to eight wire post and batten fence is the best kind of fence for stock control on stream banks but the type of fence depends on the type of stock being grazed. For dairy cattle a two-to-three-wire electric fence will generally provide satisfactory stock control.
- Plant waterway margins with local plant species.
- Maintaining riparian vegetation is important in order to achieve the water quality, wildlife and other benefits of riparian vegetation. It is advisable to undertake good stock management, weed and pest control and to keep the waterway free-flowing.
- More information on all aspects of riparian management including fencing options, suitable plant species and suppliers is available from the Taranaki Regional Council Riparian Management Officers and the website: <http://www.trc.govt.nz>



Above: Use grass swales to filter stormwater runoff from the road before it returns to natural water systems. Traditional urban-based stormwater systems like kerb and channel are expensive to install and maintain, they are inappropriate to rural character, they are over-engineered solutions for areas that will not receive high traffic volumes and remain predominantly covered with non-permeable surfaces.



Efficient Resource Use

Consider implementing sustainable practices into a subdivision or development.

Tips:

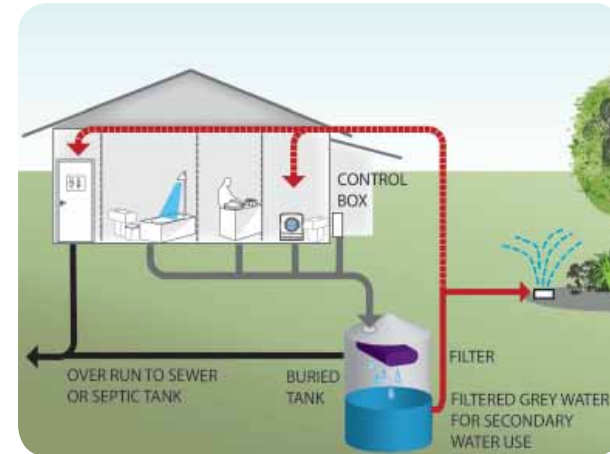
- Consider utilising renewable energy technologies like wind turbines, solar panels and passive solar design.
- Consider using sustainable septic tank systems with a composting system/biocycle.
- Recycle the wastewater produced from domestic activities such as laundering, dishwashing and bathing for things such as man-made wetlands and irrigation.
- Create a stormwater detention pond to collect runoff from impermeable surfaces for things such as fire fighting and irrigation.
- Turn garden waste into compost and use it to assist with root development and plant growth.
- Consider ways to reduce waste in the construction and long-term life of the development.

Connectivity

Look for opportunities to provide for a variety of transportation options in a subdivision or development to encourage recreational opportunities, e.g. walking, cycling and horse riding.

Tips:

- Look for opportunities to connect walkways, cycleways, horse riding trails and open spaces with publicly accessible open spaces or access strips.
- Make use of natural features such as the coast, rivers, lakes, streams, native bush, hills and ridges when planning walkways, cycleways and horse riding trails to increase visual amenity.
- Locate residential development in close proximity to a range of transport choices.
- When providing access strips, look to provide as a minimum standard a 5m-width strip that is fenced with a post, batten and wire fence less than 1.5m in height on each side and mark the strip with small triangle trail markers.



Above: Provide simple and effective water systems, e.g. roof water collection tanks, septic tanks, and naturalised or underground grey water treatment systems.



Above: Promote the characteristic active lifestyle of the district and look for opportunities to connect to existing recreational tracks and to provide new routes for a range of transport modes to serve new residents.

Building Appearance

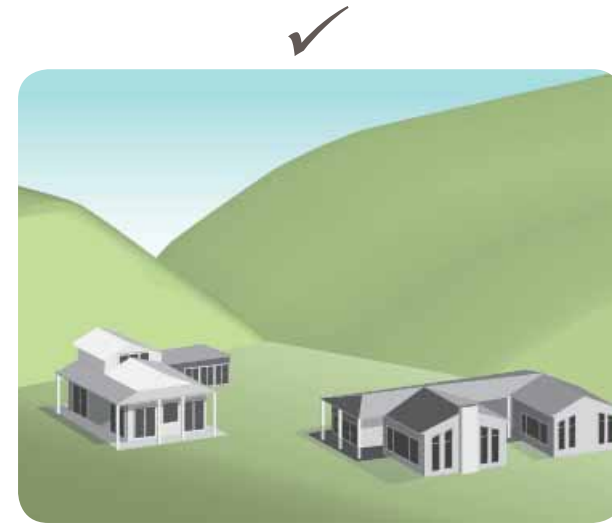
How a building looks can affect how it fits into the rural environment. Well-designed buildings can fit into the rural environment, while designs that are cluttered with a mix of materials are often incompatible with the rural environment. Inappropriate building appearance can divert the focus away from 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.

Building Scale

A building should be in proportion to the surrounding rural landscape and to the rural buildings around it, such as cowsheds, implement sheds and haysheds, instead of overwhelming them.

Tips:

- In general, residential buildings are preferable when they are not larger or taller than the surrounding rural buildings.
- For larger buildings, consider “breaks” in walls and roofs so that straight/hard lines are avoided.
- Make the width of a building greater than the height of the building.
- Avoid the building intruding into skylines.



Buildings that are in scale with other rural buildings contribute to rural character. Buildings that are excessively large often contrast with rural character.

Building Consistency

Use a consistent design for a site so that the buildings look like they are related.

Tips:

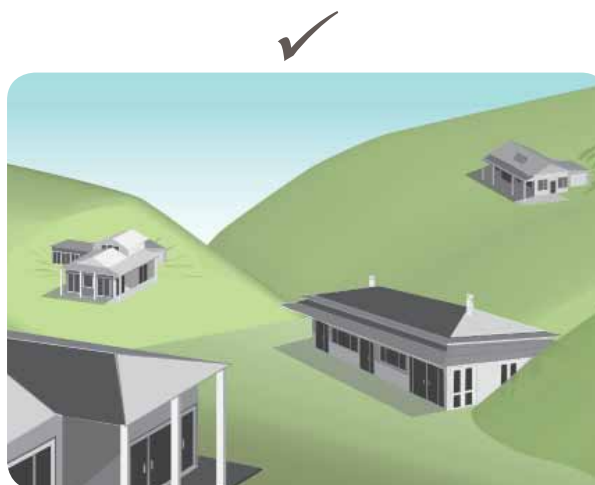
- Minimise the number of materials used on the exterior of the building.
- Reflect the local building character by using the same materials, colours and design for buildings that are related or close to each other.
- Where there is a multi-lot subdivision, consider the use of private covenants to control the style of buildings.

Building Colours

Use natural colours from the surrounding rural landscape on the exterior of buildings and consider how the colours will blend in with the sky, sea, mountain, grass or vegetation.

Tips:

- Darker, more neutral colours on the exterior of buildings that will absorb the light are preferred instead of light colours that will reflect the light and stand out more.
- Paint roofs a darker colour to anchor the building to the ground.
- Matt and/or textured surfaces on the exterior of buildings that will absorb the light are preferred instead of glossy and/or smooth surfaces that will reflect the light.
- Consider which colours suit the particular environment your site is located in, e.g. coastal vs. alpine or riverside.



Buildings that are in character with rural styles appear to fit into the landscape. Urban style buildings or those associated with overseas rural landscapes can appear inconsistent in the rural landscape, especially when located close to other rural buildings.



Use colours that respond to the natural tones of the rural landscape.

Building Style

Design the exterior of buildings so that features and materials are associated with the rural environment.

Tips:

- Features such as pitched roofs and open verandas are common in the rural area.
- Reflect the local character of the area with materials in the design that are suited to the surrounding landscape.
- Appropriate housing design that blends with existing buildings adds value to your development.

Sustainable Building

These guidelines are voluntary guidance that are secondary to legal building requirements outlined in the New Zealand Building Code. Consult with a licensed building practitioner for further information on technical requirements.

Whether building a new home or renovating an old one, there are plenty of ways to incorporate sustainable building technology into the design.

Tips:

- Try to use environmentally friendly building materials.
- Make use of windows and skylights for natural light and ventilation.
- Increase efficiency with good quality, well-installed insulation that reduces heating costs, e.g. consider double-glazing or other alternatives.
- Consider ways to reduce, reuse and recycle materials during construction.
- Ask a building professional about easy ways to incorporate sustainable building design into your home. See the Smarter Homes website for more information: <http://www.smarterhomes.co.nz/>



Above: Neutral and low-reflective colours, vegetated backdrop, open verandas and a pitched roof.



Above: Neutral and low-reflective colours, and vegetation used to blend the house into the rural landscape.



Above: This larger dwelling is accommodated into the rural environment with the use of a detailed hip and gable roof that softens the building's bulk.



Above: This dwelling's bulk and scale match other rural dwellings. Natural materials and finishes, and native vegetation, blend this modern-style building into the rural environment.

Case Studies



There are a number of scenarios for subdivision and development in the rural area. This is influenced by the landscape type, the proposed use and the surrounding land uses, and the aspirations of the landowner. The following case studies show best practice examples of how the design principles in the design guidelines can be applied in different situations.

Case studies in these guidelines will evolve as the guidelines are applied to practical cases. Currently there are two examples provided on the following pages.

Developing in a Sensitive Coastal Landscape

Large-Scale Buildings

Developing in a Sensitive Coastal Landscape

Preserving the natural character of New Plymouth District's rural coastal landscapes is the key focus for ensuring development fits into the area. The importance of the spacious and undeveloped qualities of this landscape means it generally tolerates only low densities of development. Careful design to reduce the impact of development is required. Maintaining public access and minimising the ecological effect of development on the environment are also important guiding principles when developing in the rural coastal landscape.



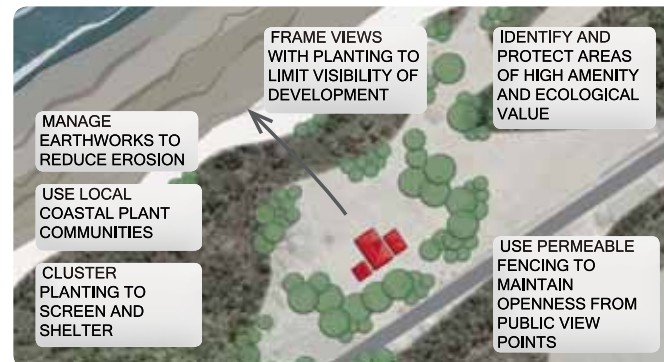
Above: The effect of buildings in the rural coastal landscape can be minimised with appropriate setbacks from public viewing points and natural features, serviced with low-impact driveway materials and with low-level neutral coloured buildings that are nestled into the landscape with clumps of coastal planting.

Design and Layout

- Focus on sensitive development balanced with protecting cultural, heritage and ecological values.
- The dune system acts as a natural ecological buffer. Take care to protect and enhance the dune system to ensure its long-term maintenance, e.g. with planting and fencing.
- Look for naturally occurring building platforms, landform and vegetation to provide context to buildings.
- Talk with tangata whenua about the cultural values of the site.



Landscaping



Servicing

- Accessways and carriageway widths should be narrow.
- Create shared entrances.
- Maintain or enhance public access to the coastal area.



Building Location



- Minimise the risk of natural hazards by locating new development away from eroding coastlines.
- Avoid siting buildings in prominent locations where they will be highly visible
- Retain rural uses between the building and the road/coast (especially the dunes) by setting back development.
- Avoid excavation of prominent landforms in the coastal area.

Building Appearance



- Use neutral colours instead of highly reflective colours.
- Enhance the essence of the local communities through detail design.
- Low, flat buildings are often easier to fit into the flat and often exposed rural coastal landscape

Large-Scale Buildings

The development proposal may be in or adjacent to an important sensitive landscape. Careful design to reduce the impact of a development is required. The proposal should consider the design principles as follows.



Above: The effect of large buildings in the rural landscape can be minimised with darker building colours and clumps of vegetation that visually break up the bulk of the building.

Design and Layout

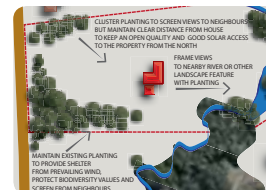
Work with the landscape:

- Look for naturally occurring building platforms and breaks in the landform that will conceal buildings from main viewing points.



Landscaping

- Vegetation clustered along boundaries or around a development can increase privacy from roads and neighbours.
- Use fencing styles which allow views across the rural landscape such as open board and batten and post and wire
- Use vegetation to soften the hard edges of buildings. Trying to fully screen a building can create hard, artificial lines so allow screening to provide filtered views.
- Scan the surrounding environment for pleasant and/or objectionable views to manage.



Servicing

- Accessways and carriageway widths should be as narrow as possible to minimise the impact, increase safety and efficiency, and control vehicle movement and speeds.
- Permeable materials like gravel reduce the volume of stormwater.



Building Location



- Avoid siting buildings in prominent locations where they will be highly visible.
- Retain rural uses between the building and the road.
- Locate buildings so that existing vegetation provides shelter and screening.



Building Appearance



- Consider steps in walls and rooflines so that long straight lines are minimised.
- Use darker, more neutral colours instead of light colours.
- Use building features such as pitched roofs and verandas.
- Avoid 'foreign' shed styles, e.g. US barns.



Appendix One: Statutory Context

The following information outlining the statutory context is provided as a result of comment received from developers and professionals during the guideline writing process.

The Resource Management Act 1991 provides the legislative basis for developing district plans, and promotes the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. Part II section 5 defines the purpose of the Act, the sustainable management of the natural and physical resources. Section 6 deals with matters of national importance including the requirement to identify and protect outstanding landscapes and protect the coast from inappropriate subdivision and development. Section 7 relates to other matters.

Land Use and Development

In New Plymouth District activities may require a resource consent from the district council depending on the effects on the environment of the activity. Typical effects of activities that trigger consent requirements include bulk and location of building and traffic and noise generation. In the rural environment area rural character has been identified as a quality to maintain and so activities may be assessed in terms of their effect on the rural character. Other overlay areas may also be relevant including effects on important landscapes, vegetation and historic heritage.

Water Use and Effects on Water Resources

Taranaki Regional Council is responsible for managing and monitoring water quality in the region. Activities likely to require a consent relating to water include: Extracting water from ground water; changing the course of water; building over water courses; dams, culverts, weirs, fords in a water course; erosion control and contaminant discharge.

Discharge of Contaminants

Taranaki Regional Council is also responsible for administering contaminant discharge consents. Activities likely to trigger consent requirements include disposal of grey water and stormwater, construction of landfills, disposal of agricultural contaminants and effluent disposal.

Soil Disturbance

Both the regional and district councils administer consents for soil disturbance. Consent is likely to be required for roading, tracking and other earthworks depending on the effects.

Information Sources

New Plymouth District council holds information about the following:

- District Plan and planning maps.
- District-wide landscape assessment.
- Land information memorandums (LIMs) and designations.
- Stream locations.
- Coastal Strategy and supporting documentation.

General information about the Resource Management Act can be found on the Ministry for the Environment website - <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/rma/everyday/>

Information on covenanting land can be obtained from the Open Space website - <http://www.openspace.org.nz/> - Taranaki Regional Council and New Plymouth District Council - www.newplymouthnz.com

Information and assistance for riparian and soil management can be obtained from Taranaki Regional Council: <http://www.trc.govt.nz/land-and-soil> and <http://www.trc.govt.nz/riparian-management>

Environment and Design Award Information can be sourced from the following websites:

- Taranaki Regional Council Environmental Awards - <http://www.trc.govt.nz/environmental-awards/>
- Landscape Design Awards - http://www.nzila.co.nz/awards_current.asp
- Architectural Design Awards - <http://www.nzia.co.nz/awards.aspx>
- Also: Surveying, Engineering and other professional and institutional awards.

Plan Change 27: Maintaining Rural Character

Plan Change 27, the first plan change in the rural review process, was made operative in January 2012. Plan Change 27 added provisions to control the scale, location, density and design of subdivision and land-use to ensure the maintenance of rural character.

The following provisions have been affected by Plan Change 27. Please note that a full list of rural provisions is available in the District Plan.

General Subdivision Provision

Flexibility for small allotment subdivision is provided while still ensuring the maintenance of rural character.

- Subdivision of one small allotment (minimum area of 4000m²), provided there is at least a 20ha balance remaining, is assessed as a controlled activity (a resource consent must be granted).
- Subdivision of up to three small allotments (minimum area of 4000m²), provided there is at least a 20ha balance remaining, is assessed as a restricted discretionary activity.
- Subdivision of up to four small allotments (less than 20ha), provided there is at least a 4ha balance remaining, is assessed as a full discretionary activity.
- The number of allotments that can be applied for is calculated from the certificate of title as it existed on 5 March 1999.
- Minor boundary adjustments are assessed as a controlled activity.
- All other subdivisions are assessed as a non-complying activity.

Number of Habitable Buildings

Flexibility is provided, recognising the diverse living needs in the rural area, while still ensuring the maintenance of rural character.

- One habitable building permitted per site (regardless of site size).
- Up to three habitable buildings can be provided per site where there is an area of 20ha for each habitable building.
- Two habitable buildings are permitted on any site (regardless of site size) provided that:

- One of the buildings is smaller than the other (no more than 75 per cent of the size of the other habitable building); and
 - The two habitable buildings are in close proximity (within 25m of each other).
- Resource consent is required for additional habitable buildings that do not meet the above requirements. This is assessed as a full discretionary activity.

Setbacks

Certainty is provided for owners of small, undeveloped sites, while ensuring adequate setbacks to maintain rural character.

- All buildings to be set back 30m from the road boundary as a permitted activity. Resource consent is required for buildings located:
 - Ten metres to less than 30m from the road boundary as a restricted discretionary activity.
 - Less than 10 metres from the road boundary as a full discretionary activity.
- Habitable buildings to be set back 15m from the side boundary as a permitted activity. Resource consent is required for habitable buildings located;
 - Ten metres to less than 15m from the side boundary as a restricted discretionary activity.
 - Less than 10m from the side boundary as a full discretionary activity.
- All other buildings to be set back 10m from the side boundary as a permitted activity. Resource consent is required for buildings located;
 - Five metres to less than 10m from the side boundary as a restricted discretionary activity.
 - Less than 5m from the side boundary as a full discretionary activity.
- An exception is provided for habitable buildings on sites that were subdivided prior to Plan Change 27 and that do not have sufficient buildable area (based on an average area of 225m² with dimensions of 15mx15m outside the setbacks). A controlled activity resource consent must be granted.

Size of Buildings on Small Sites

On sites less than 4ha, non-habitable buildings must be no more than 400m² in area. Resource consent is required for non-habitable buildings that are the following size:

- Between 400m² but less than 500m² as a restricted discretionary activity.
- More than 500m² as a full discretionary activity.

Landscaping

There are landscaping and screening requirements for car parking and outdoor storage areas that adjoin and are visible from New Plymouth's entrance corridors.

For further information on District Plan requirements please refer to a copy of the District Plan, which is available at all libraries and service centres and online at www.newplymouthnz.com.

In addition to the Rural environment area rules, please refer to the relevant overlay provisions in the District Plan, e.g. coastal overlays, significant natural areas, waahi tapu sites and archaeological sites, etc). Overlays include specific objectives, policies and rules that need to be considered in addition to the environment area provisions.

The District Plan and these Design Guidelines

These design guidelines are non-statutory and their success is reliant on their use, which will be essentially on a voluntary basis. This means that individuals can strive to create positive environmental outcomes that contribute to the pleasantness, amenity, character, livability and long-term sustainability of the rural area. These guidelines will make it easier for customers and the Council as we work through the planning process.

Although these design guidelines are non-statutory, they can assist with interpreting statutory processes under the District Plan. When an application does not meet the baseline standards outlined in the District Plan and is assessed as a full discretionary/non-complying activity, an assessment of the proposal against the objectives and policies of the District Plan is required. These design guidelines will assist with determining how a proposal is actually meeting the objectives and policies. The statutory weight in this assessment process will be with the objectives and policies as opposed to the design guidelines themselves.



Te Kaunihera-ā-Rohe o Ngāmotu
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