

What is the Future of Auckland's Rural Areas

Executive Summary

There is huge variation across the breadth of Auckland's 384,000 hectares of rural land in terms of character, function and roles and this area is not static but is changing quickly in terms of land uses, environmental and settlement patterns.

The principle questions or problems that emerge from the analysis of current state analysis which are most relevant to a spatial plan are:

- pressures on rural land and resources
- impacts of rural land uses on natural environments
- land values and fostering rural productivity
- how to facilitate diverse incomes, achieve effective growth management and long term protection and enhancement of the things we value in the rural areas of Auckland
- how to take into account future opportunities, threats and future needs relating to rural areas such as Food production, processing and extraction; research and development support; environmental resource issues and bio security; landscape, open space, recreation and coastal values; service delivery to residents; and transport and water management.

The Auckland Plan needs to balance or at least arrive at a clear position on how to meet a range of not necessarily complimentary objectives. Suitable objectives for the Auckland Plan are:

- to have a viable productive rural economy,
- strong rural communities,
- a quality rural environment,
- a range of lifestyle choices and
- well managed production, utility, recreation and tourism functions.

This can mean many things, but should address the following priorities:

- Opportunities for food and other rural production activities are maintained and enhanced.
- The store of natural capital in Auckland is steadily increased and green infrastructure is carefully managed alongside the city's hard infrastructure.
- The extent, timing and location of growth in the rural area is managed in a way that compliments a compact liveable city.
- Rural settlement and the changing needs of growing rural areas and the rural economy are assimilated without losing those features that make an attractive liveable rural environment.
- Rural land uses are carefully managed to minimise impacts on the natural environment, including biodiversity, soils, freshwater and coastal environments.

Response options for how to get there include:

1. Refine Current Approach and Consolidate Policy
This approach involves implementing draft ARPS and growth strategy directives for rural areas including the sectors agreements, structure plans and other strategic documents, an MUL policy and considering locally driven MUL shifts on a case by case basis against strategic policies on compact urban form and managing natural resources.
2. Apply a green belt policy framework to critical rural urban interface areas
A greenbelt policy would be applied to all or extensive parts of rural areas of Auckland outside of identified, large land release areas to prevent urban sprawl and ad-hoc development and protect the environment. This permanent policy will mean rural areas will become permanent parts of the metropolitan framework and will benefit from a range of support reflecting their value to the greater region.
3. Place Specific Tailored Approaches
This option envisages developing and implementing specific zones or policy area overlay approaches in individual rural areas to manage and foster particular local issues.

4. Facilitating Rural Development Opportunities Approach

Allow and provide a supportive policy framework for a range of rural growth opportunities with a certain level of proximity to existing centres and transport links shaped by design lead assessment criteria focusing on leveraging environmental and public access benefits and offering incentives to promote comprehensive development of large areas.

A set of basic strategic policy building blocks are recommended that should be common to any set of adopted approaches is also recommended for the Auckland Plan.

Investigation: What is the future of Auckland's Rural Areas?

Many rural areas of Auckland are undergoing significant changes in character, function and role in response to changing economic conditions, land use trends and population growth. However, extensive parts of Auckland's land area continues to be dominated by rural production activities and appears typical of other rural parts of New Zealand. Rural areas of Auckland are highly diverse and have contrasting potential futures. Different values and tensions between different activities need to be planned in a strategic coordinated way to manage rural areas successfully. Rural areas have an important role to play in fostering a diverse and sustainable economy, providing the future scenic, leisure and recreation benefits of un-built areas and open space for a liveable city, close to market food security, income and employment for people from diverse backgrounds including recent migrants, and managing the urban rural interface.

The Current Situation

In discussing rural areas, it is noted that although 70% (384,160 hectares) of Auckland's land area can be described as "rural", it has varying degrees of rural, sub-urban and urban characteristics. Also, certain components of Auckland's rural economy are located in urban areas and outside of Auckland. Places like Piha and parts of Waiheke fall within Regional Policy and RMA definitions of rural areas and consider themselves manifestly beyond the "town", but have little in common with predominantly farming areas around Wellsford and Pukekohe, which are very different again from the large areas of conservation estate and parks. Landscapes are similarly varied from the wild, remote and pristine to the highly modified and range from quaint and idyllic to peri-urban and semi-industrialised settings

Current State of Rural Policy and Legislation

The current state of Rural Policy comprises a large body of material which is attached to Appendix 1 to this report.

Characteristics of Auckland's Rural Land and Environment

Strong farming history

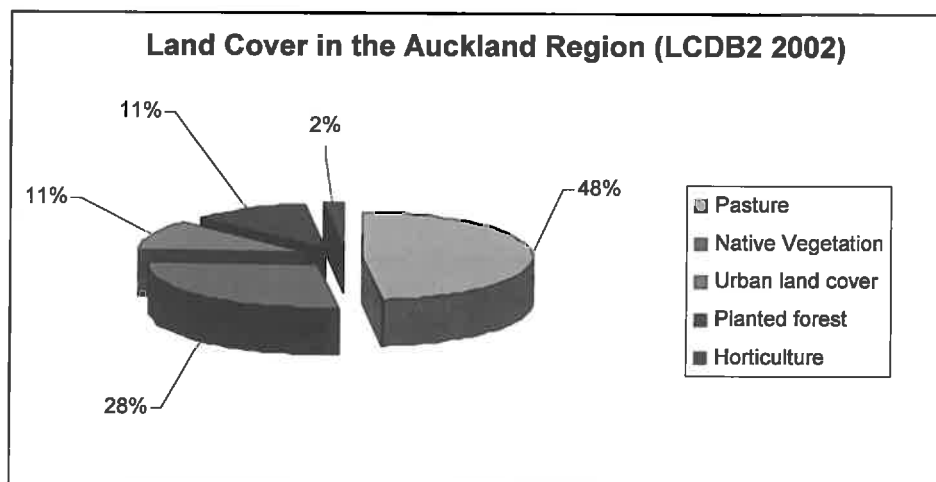
Auckland is blessed with abundant rain and a mild climate and Franklin, South Auckland, West Auckland and much of the isthmus are naturally fertile, with rich volcanic loam soils. Traditionally, Auckland has had a strong agricultural economy with particular emphasis on market gardening, horticulture and other types of intensive farming. Dairying and other types of pastoral farming and forestry have always been major land uses. Auckland has the highest number of vegetable growers in the north island and the highest number of nurseries, poultry farms and floriculture farms of any region in the country.

Of the 253,525 hectares of land used for farming and countryside living in Auckland¹, 60% of the areas of dairy, sheep-beef and livestock farming are in Rodney, followed by Franklin District (23%) and Manukau City (9%). 82% of the market gardens and just under half the horticulture occurs within the Franklin District. Rodney contains 28% of land used for horticulture.

¹ Agribase 2009.

Land use changes

Significant land use changes occurring in Auckland include the encroachment of urban development and countryside living into rural land through the subdivision and sale of smaller land parcels. Where historically this was in the form of 4 hectare (10 acre blocks) this is more typically 1-2 hectare blocks or smaller. Between 1987 and 2001 the area of land with the least physical limitations for productive sustained use² decreased at a rate of 228 hectares per year and 333 hectares per year between 2001 and 2006. This has a range of short and long-term implications for wellbeing including improvements to rural services and negative impacts on natural features and landscapes, biodiversity and water quality.



The above data on land cover in rural areas shows that 27% of the region is predominately native scrub or forest however most of this occurs at higher elevation. Outside of a few large conservation areas lowland vegetation is now largely gone, with much of what remains in scattered remnants with little or no effective protection. Only 4% of wetlands remain in the Auckland Region and less than 100 of these are on public land.

Countryside living

There is significant sustained demand for countryside living in rural environments that is separate from demand for more land for residential business and other urban development and for farming. All rural district plans contain many thousands of vacant and potential lots with potential to meet this demand. This is provided in the form of specific areas zoned for countryside living, bush and wetland protection subdivision incentives. There is a lot of debate about the usability of this potential and the potential for unfavourable outcomes for landscapes, transport and other considerations if it were taken up³.

Analysing landscapes over time suggests that demand for country living cannot be provided for while retaining the things that people value about rural areas. The area of land identified for valuation and rates setting purposes by Property IQ (formally Quotable Valuation) as being "lifestyle" properties, increased by 24,114 hectares between 1996 and 2010 to over 100,000 ha's of land. The number of lifestyle properties is now nearly 24,000. These figures tell a story of a massive fragmentation of the rural land resource of Auckland.

² Land Use Capability (LUC) Classes 1-3 are defined in the ARPS as Prime Agricultural Land. It is noted however that a large range of rural production activities can be carried out in other land use classes and that site sizes, land price, transport and water access, land slope and separation from sensitive activities are critical characteristics of potentially productive areas.

³ Additional opportunities for various forms of "rural hamlets" and managed residential parks in rural settings are often advocated as having certain advantages over conventional countryside living in terms of landscape outcomes by consolidating development and potential to achieve better "greening" of the countryside than typical commercial farming.

Although well cared for lifestyle blocks have in many cases brought positive changes to rural areas, too much rural residential development crowds out productive activities which create rural character, prevents the efficient use of productive land (ie. complaints about noises, smells and trucks), erodes the rural economy (ie. hiking up land values which flow into burdensome rates) creates transport problems around the city edge and erodes the pleasant open character of rural areas (ie. by filling it with grand houses and residential clutter).

Subdivision incentives such as bush and wetland protection lots and reserve contributions have brought many thousands of individual habitat areas under protection⁴. However, many of these areas have issues relating to the actual physical protection of these areas and with weed and pest eradication.

Land use effects

Loss of biodiversity is a particular issue outside of formal protection areas. Habitats in lakes, rivers, rivers and streams are impacted by rural production practices, urban development and lack of active management of weeds and pests. Loss of lowland ecosystems to land clearance for pastoral farming continues.

Rural land uses contribute increased stormwater run-off, sediment, nutrient and pathogens to waterways and coastal receiving environments. Modification of land use from natural forest cover to pasture has significantly increased volumes of stormwater run-off.

51% of the land in the Auckland area is unstable (a figure largely unchanged between 1999 and 2010). Erosion from human activities has increased. Highest sediment yields were from forest harvesting, the lowest yields were in fully developed urban catchments and the biggest increases in yields were identified in areas where the percentage of pasture increased and forest cover decreased.

Areas of high natural character and outstanding natural landscapes outside of the conservation estate and park network are also places with pressure for intensification of buildings from new countryside living subdivision or expansion of existing coastal settlements.

Auckland's forests, freshwater shrublands, and estuarine systems show varying rates of decline. Information on terrestrial biodiversity indicates lowland rivers, lowland forests, lakes, wetlands and sand dune systems acutely threatened. Much of Auckland's biodiversity (variety of life) is confined to small, localised and fragmented habitats spread across rural areas and some urban areas. The ecological quality of many areas is degraded but the cumulative value of remaining fragments are significant.

Most types of agricultural discharges are permitted provided they meet prescribed levels of performance. In 2008-2009 81% of dairy farms inspected were fully compliant or had minor non-compliance issues to resolve.

The 2009 ARC state of the environment report highlighted lack of fencing of forest fragments leading to grazing and regeneration failure on a number of high conservation value sites and the abundance of weeds and pests in forestry and natural areas. Research showed levels of fencing and planting of riparian areas were much lower than figures in the self reported Clean Stream Accord reports.

Other changes

Numbers of dairy cattle, sheep, deer and pigs reduced by 16%, 34%, 31% and 48% respectively between 1994 and 2004. This is at a time where stocking rates are intensifying in most commercial farms both within Auckland and across New Zealand.

Some rural areas in Auckland have an increasingly layered and mature bi-play between the natural environment and working environment that are a pointer to more intensively used rural areas in Auckland's long term future. Areas such as Whitford, Clevedon, Waiheke and Matakana are

⁴ Over 4,000 in Rodney and over 4,000 in Franklin in 2010

attractions in their own right, and are increasingly realising potential for a range of visitor income streams.

Rural People, Populations and Activities

Rural populations are growing by 7,500 people per year. The 50 year population growth target in the regional growth strategy for rural areas was achieved in 17 years and even faster in Rodney.

This growth differs from that experienced in metropolitan Auckland with most new residents coming from Auckland and other parts of New Zealand and relatively few from international migration. Big drivers for this growth include demand for lifestyle blocks and opportunities to live in more spacious, scenic and tranquil locations. "Sea Change" and "Bush Change" are well documented population movement trends in urban fringe areas of Australia (stereotyped as retiring "baby boomers") which seem to be replicating themselves in Auckland, although not in such a pronounced way.

The significance of off farm income (and associated commuting) is another distinguishing characteristic of these rural areas. A large independent survey of rural landowners in Rodney found that less than 10% of rural landowners earn more than half their income from use of land. Less than 31 % of rural landowners who owned more than 4ha and considered themselves farmers earn more than half their income. 62% of lifestylers earned nothing from land but 36% earned something from their land.

Rural areas play a critical role for Auckland in providing a range of recreation opportunities that will only increase in importance as Auckland grows and intensifies. As well as obvious dedicated features like golf courses, playing fields the conservation estate and public parks, large forestry blocks play a multitude of roles (horse riding, mountain biking, 4 wheel driving, motorcross, offroad running and more). Boating, surfing, padel boarding, windsurfing, kitesurfing beyond the city are noted features of an Auckland lifestyle and the visitor economy, and add to demands from residents and productive activities for a cleaner marine environment and highly accessible rural roads. A commitment to continuing to add to the network of public parks in advance of Auckland's outward spread is important in this context.

Many rural areas including the gulf islands have issues with lack of employment opportunities exacerbated by high transport time and financial costs.

Rural Infrastructure

The rural transport system is more costly (per resident) to maintain and more difficult to serve with public transport than the urban area. The low or very low density development and the associated high reliance on travel by car increases the difficulties inherent in encouraging walking, cycling and more use of public transport, and in reducing the environmental effects of the transport system. There are approximately 4,210 km of rural roads, including 1,127 km unsealed roads, located mainly in Rodney and the Hauraki Gulf Islands.

The average trip distance for rural areas is around 10 kms while urban areas had an average trip distance of around 6.7 kms (52% lower)⁵. Rural households generate the same number of trips per day (8.76) as urban properties (8.92). The mode share of rural areas is predominantly travel by private vehicles (including vehicle passengers) at around 90 per cent compared with 83 pr cent for urban areas. Not surprisingly, the share of active modes is lower in rural areas (around five per cent) than in urban areas (around 12 per cent).

Wastewater and water supply infrastructure is also proportionately more expensive in rural areas because of the separation of settlements preventing economies of scale. For example, Rodney has 10 separate wastewater schemes and 6 water supply schemes.

Stormwater run off from rural land carries nutrient, sediment and pathogens from rural land use practices, to freshwater and coastal receiving environments. Stormwater in rural areas of the region are generally not managed through public works and infrastructure (unlike in some other regions). Efforts to manage the effects of stormwater, contaminants and sediment from both urban and rural

⁵ Auckland Regional Rural Transport Issues, Ross Rutherford, Transport Planning Solutions Ltd 2009

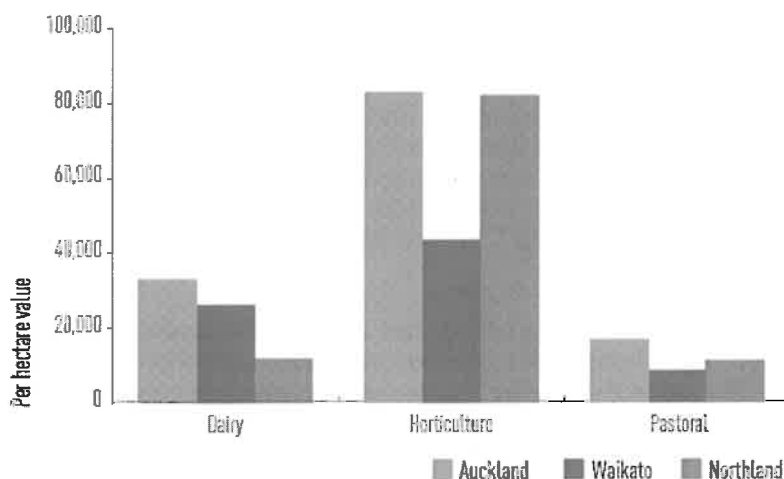
land uses and practices on freshwater and coastal receiving environments are not always well integrated. Prioritisation of interventions (though integrated catchment and land use planning, infrastructure funding, environmental projects etc) based on criteria like sensitivity, significance, impacts being incurred, capacity to restore needs to be consistent and more coordinated. In the past stormwater investment in urban areas has not necessarily been aligned with rural programmes, and rural programmes have perhaps been underfunded considering relative impacts on receiving environments and the potential cost/benefits of mitigation compared with urban retrofit projects.

Lack of water and wastewater infrastructure is the principle growth constraint in rural areas and on-site disposal systems are creating significant environmental problems in areas where there are higher concentrations of houses.

Rural Economy

The agricultural sector is a significant contributor to the regional economy but has been in a long-term decline in both relative and absolute terms. Agriculture's contribution to regional GDP has been reducing by 0.4% per annum and decreased from \$419.6 million to \$399.7 million between 1994 and 2005 (in 1996 dollars)⁶. On the other hand Other Primary Sector GDP increased by \$428 million to \$613.2 million (1.3% per year) over the same period. Agricultural manufacturing declined by 48% over the same period. The rural servicing sector increased by 154% over the same period possibly reflecting a decline in 'do-it-yourself- farming and an increase in use of contractors.

A number of significant structural economic issues are important drivers in Auckland's rural economy, first being the cost of land in Auckland relative to other regions (see graph below). The (average) value of rural land for areas dominated by forestry like Hotoe, Kaipara Hills, Ohirangi and South Head are less than \$15,000 per hectare. Rural areas close to amenities like east coast swimming beaches and State Highways such as Ti Point, Point Wells, Scandrett Bay and Omaha have average capital values of \$200,000 – \$500,000 + per hectare. Rural areas close to metropolitan Auckland such as Coatesville, Dairy Flat and Stillwater have average capital values of \$300,000 - \$400,000 + per hectare⁷.

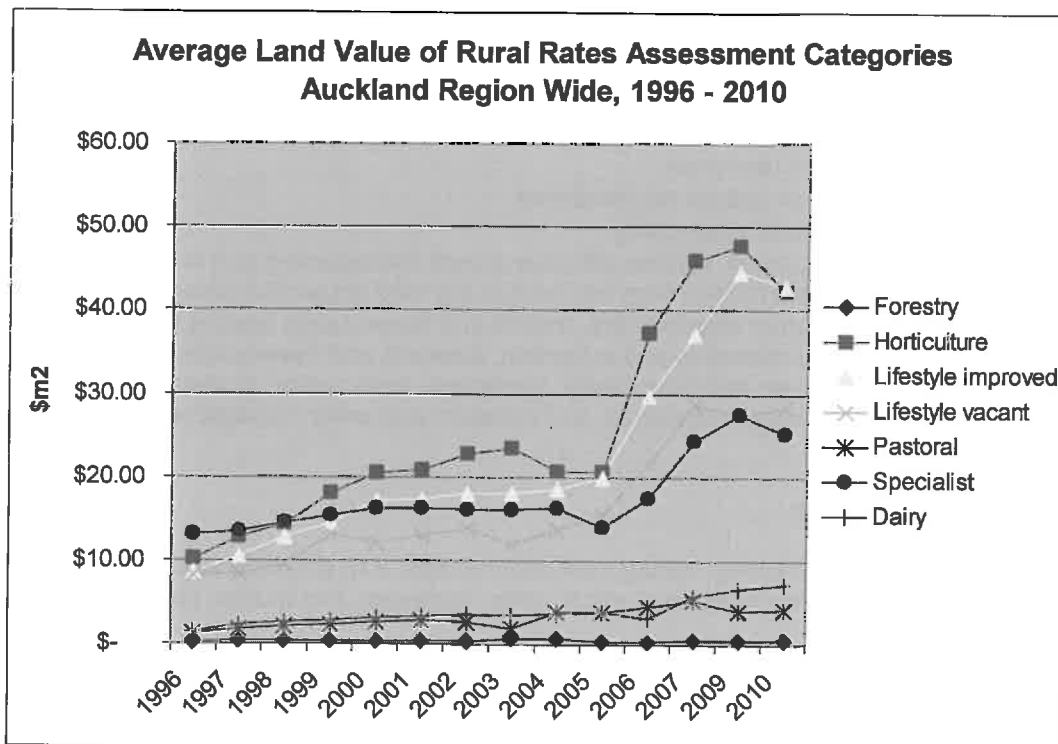


The following graph shows how the value of small blocks relative to large farms is not only greater than that of traditional forestry, pastoral and dairy farming, but the difference in per metre value is increasing. The high value of horticulture land shown on the graph is also notable and reflects the fact that horticulture is located on land that (as well as being highly productive soils) is desirable for lifestyle and other forms of development for being flat, stable, already in small parcels and close to the

⁶ BERL Regional Database Capital Strategy Stocktake of the Auckland Regional Economy 2008

⁷ Property IQ Data (formerly Quotable Value), Wellington 2010.

city fringe. Notwithstanding the lack of a dairy factory in the Region, the relatively static value of dairy farms is notable, given the strength of commodity prices over recent years and national trends.



Another economic issue is the predominance of processing, manufacturing, business support, and other business activities not undertaking agriculture in rural areas⁸. A distinction should be drawn between business activities derived from or servicing rural production and those that are not. Manufacturing's strong presence in rural areas appears to be driven in large part by the Glenbrook Steel Mill in Franklin alone. It is also noted that many rural businesses not associated with agriculture or farming benefit from or depend on the characteristics of their rural locale. The rural economy of Auckland is typical of other rural areas with large numbers of small businesses, owner operators and home occupations.

Where Auckland's rural economy differs markedly, is in the large numbers of rural and urban residents who travel large distances for work, learning, recreation and shopping. There are a number of notable niche production activities in the north of Auckland such as Puhoi cheese, Southern Paprika, vineyards around Kumeu and Matakana. The importance of a small number of large scale vegetable growers and an important equestrian industry in the south of Auckland is another significant characteristic.

The unique economic advantages of Auckland's rural areas is another important consideration for strategic planning of Auckland rural areas. These include:

- The benefits of proximity to urban markets, processing facilities, export gateways, skills and knowledge, labour, services, diverse employment and urban amenities.
- Opportunities for rural areas to be centres of consumption that compliment production – ie. rural vineyards, visitor services, tourism and recreation.
- Greater feasibility for broadband rollout and uptake from proximity to large urban communications hubs and corridors.
- Larger market for higher value niche agriculture and demand for fresh and local produce that can nurture potential for exporting.

⁸ Research by BERL puts the proportion of rural business engaged in agriculture and primary activities at 40%.

- Ongoing growth of farmers markets such as Clevedon, Coatesville and Matakana and other markets around the region that sell local produce.

Main Issues Arising from the Evidence

The principle questions or problems that emerge from the analysis summarised above which are most relevant to a spatial plan are:

- pressures on rural land and resources
- impacts of rural land uses on natural environments
- land values and fostering rural productivity
- how to facilitate diverse incomes, achieve effective growth management and long term protection and enhancement of the things we value in the rural areas of Auckland
- how to take into account future opportunities, threats and future needs relating to rural areas such as Food production, processing and extraction; research and development support; environmental resource issues and bio security; landscape, open space, recreation and coastal values; service delivery to residents; and transport and water management.

Objective (Where we'd like to be):

To have a viable productive rural economy, strong rural communities, a quality rural environment, a range of lifestyle choices and well managed production, utility, recreation and tourism functions.

This means:

- Opportunities for food and other rural production activities are maintained and enhanced.
- The store of natural capital in Auckland is steadily increased and green infrastructure is carefully managed alongside the city's hard infrastructure.
- The extent, timing and location of growth in the rural area is managed in a way that compliments a compact liveable city.
- Rural settlement and the changing needs of growing rural areas and the rural economy are assimilated without losing those features that make an attractive liveable rural environment.
- Rural land uses are carefully managed to minimise impacts on the natural environment, including biodiversity, soils, freshwater and coastal environments.

Propositions: the Role, Function and Approach Options for Rural Areas:

There are a range of responses to environmental, growth and economic management in rural areas each of which have a range of pro's and con's in terms of wellbeing and liveability. Implementing a Spatial Plan direction for rural areas is likely to require a multifaceted tool box of policies and place specific initiatives and approaches which could draw elements from a range of options. A clear preference for 4 conceptual options set out in the table below should be set out in the Auckland Plan. In addition, a set of basic strategic policy building blocks common to any selected approach options are considered necessary for the high level policy direction the Auckland plan should contain.

5. Refine Current Approach and Consolidate Policy

How it would be done	What this would be like	Obvious Pros and Cons
<p>The current approach is mainly about ensuring land release decisions contain major urban development within the metropolitan urban limits and the limits of rural and coastal settlements, restrict further countryside living in terms of location, scale and extent to limit adverse effects, promote containment and intensification of urban development and enhancing transport networks by concentrating most growth within existing urban boundaries, and protect the natural environment and coastal areas.</p> <p><u>Changes:</u> Simplifying the process of releasing land for development including regular and frequent assessment of land supply for specific requirements including business land, education, open space through a process that considers land releases simultaneously..</p> <p>Strengthen emphasis on focusing the majority of growth in existing centres and growth areas to protect fringe land.</p> <p>Review the location of the current urban limit in the light of the latest landscape assessments, growth projections, and catchment management work. A number of controls on countryside living, rural and urban activities should need refinement as part of this.</p> <p>Allow capacity for subdivision and development in rural areas to be “transferred” to more desirable or profitable locations and forms to meet lifestyle aspirations providing a broad range of living environments and locations.</p> <p>Achieve greater standardisation and integration of environmental regulations and definitions through an amalgamated set of regulatory plans. This can be complemented by lifting of the bar in areas like earthworks control, landscape protection, vegetation removal, wetland modification, water quality protections as appropriate. Structure planning will use integrated catchment management planning to promote water sensitive urban design, green infrastructure, appropriate recognition and management of flooding constraints, and the like.</p> <p>Consolidate a clearer “centres first” policy that accepts that not all demand for country living, holiday homes, retirement villages, new urban schools or major retail development can or should be accommodated in rural areas if the long term wider efficiencies and liveability benefits of a compact urban form are to be achieved and limits such development accordingly. This means moving away from the current approach of maintaining a responsive supply of subdivision opportunities in each of three sectors (Auckland’s northern and western sector, the</p>	<p>Strong demand and extensive rural development opportunities will continue rapid conversion of land to lifestyle blocks. This will be most intense close to motorway access points and coastal areas where wastewater infrastructure is provided, but will steadily continue wherever roads are sealed.</p> <p>The supply and price of land will encourage un-serviced rural settlement pressure further out with greater pressure on production activities, landscapes, rural transport networks and other constraints.</p> <p>Land use conflicts (ie. smelly mucky farms and noisy dusty quarries vs the tranquil rural idyll fantasy) are likely to fight it out on a case by case basis in an increasingly jumbled and suburbanised rural environment.</p> <p>Impracticality (diseconomies) of servicing small remote settlements likely to focus growth into a series of urban edge shifts (made more complicated by the numbers of lifestyle blocks in these areas). Question about widening watercare service umbrella.</p>	<p>Infrastructure can be planned and provided for in a responsive and strategic way.</p> <p>Big picture growth management objectives will continue to frustrate some local and individual ambitions while aiding others.</p> <p>Land release process can be politicised and highly contested in communities, council and the court.</p> <p>Balancing act of avoiding being overly aggressive and too slow in providing for growth likely to always be criticised.</p> <p>Lack of certainty encourages strategic land banking, litigation and speculative land prices in urban fringe areas.</p> <p>Development that doesn’t depend on accessibility will continue to “leapfrog” the limit of the policy area eg holiday homes in Mangawhai.</p>

central and gulf islands sector, and the southern sector) to provide for existing levels of rural growth.	

6. Apply a green belt policy framework to critical rural urban interface areas

How it would be done	What this would be like	Obvious Pros and Cons
<p>A greenbelt policy would be applied to appropriate rural areas of Auckland to prevent urban sprawl and ad-hoc development and protect the environment within them. This permanent policy fixture will mean rural areas will become permanent parts of the metropolitan framework. <u>This will require:</u> Greater Council support for rural areas and a commitment to managing incremental change consistently.</p> <p>Reject the notion that valuable resources, such as highly versatile soils should be lost to productive use for short term economic advantage through significant subdivision and land use changes.</p> <p>Further subdivision of rural land would be limited to planned expansion of existing towns and villages through Council initiated plan changes to accommodate local growth and major new transit oriented settlements and otherwise prohibited.</p> <p>New methods for limiting the mutability of policy under the RMA and frequently changing elected representatives, including possible changes to legislation would need to be considered to implement this approach. Existing plans would have to be significantly altered (particularly in terms of the extent and of rural residential development opportunities across rural areas) to limit the apparent incremental changes occurring.</p> <p><u>Expanding existing incentives and other mechanisms for avoiding the uptake of</u></p>	<p>This proposal is characterised by a permanent urban edge and clearly defined rural areas outside of identified, large land release areas. Rural areas are not seen as areas awaiting urbanisation.</p> <p>Large tracts of land that are less suitable for production would periodically be developed at strategic intervals⁹ at sufficient scale to encompass employment, education, recreation, social, retail and business services. Master planning will control disordered conversion to urban uses</p> <p>Although strong anti-sprawl policies are a common feature of planning in many OECD countries, they are normally given specific objectives, statutory tools and coordination support at national and state government level¹⁰.</p>	<p>Although there is a lot of for and against debate about such approaches, prohibiting ad-hoc development in rural areas leads to gentrification and ageing of the rural population over time on the one hand, but more efficient and more attractive land use in towns villages and the countryside on the other.</p> <p>Certainty about the future of rural areas could encourage investment in rural production and sustainable land use and discourage inflationary speculation on rural land.</p> <p>While soil quality may be less of a factor of production than in the past, it is prudent to protect its versatility in the face of long term global uncertainties (including the effects of the transition from reliance on petroleum transport) and to provide certainty for the growth of agricultural production in Auckland.</p> <p>Uncomfortable fit with NZ's frontier psyche</p>

⁹ Portland Oregon does this every 5 years and maintains a 30 year land supply.

¹⁰ Urban-rural Linkages: In View of Controlling Urban Sprawl, Regional Development Policies in OECD Counties, OECD 2010.

<p>development rights can be considered, along with methods for amalgamating fragmented rural land in the most appropriate locations.</p> <p>Public access across private farmland is not currently a notable feature of rural areas in Auckland as it is in Britain and other places. To ensure rural policy for Auckland is about more than people's views from the car window, greater support for rural land stewardship in the form of rates and regulatory policy and environmental works funding needs to be married to sharing what we have in rural areas.</p> <p>This level of impact on the use of private property needs to establish legitimacy through transparent evaluation and stakeholder participation.</p>	<p>Important scenic, employment, recreational, heritage and export benefits as centres of agricultural production will be protected. Auckland will have significant quantities of fresh food, and an ongoing supply of materials for construction and related industries, close to market.</p>	<p>that would "fly in the face" of the increasingly jumbled character of the environments and trends in rural areas.</p> <p>While strong planning is not impossible, RMA plan change and consent tool kits are not designed to facilitate such prescriptive and deterministic planning.</p>
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7. Place Specific Tailored Approaches

How it would be done	What this would be like	Obvious Pros and Cons
<p>This approach envisages developing and implementing specific zones or policy area overlay approaches in individual rural areas to manage and foster particular local issues.</p> <p>This can encompass greater emphasis on integrated catchment management, specific planning for coastal areas, for hill country areas, for productive and developable areas with more modest terrain, for areas with predominately lifestyle farming lots and rural residential development including interventions and implementation works.</p> <p>It can use overlays to identify significant natural areas, promote green corridors for recreation linkages and for ecological pathways. Specific policy packages can be developed for planning rural villages together with their immediate surroundings. Catchment management planning and investment in rural programmes including planting unstable slopes, riparian fencing and planting, reduction of nutrient loading and stock levels in some areas, removal of stock access to waterways can pair planning policy with implementation works and other actions.</p> <p>There are extensive examples of this sort of approach in rural Auckland with place specific policy approaches for Dune Lakes in Rodney, the Omaha Flats Special Zone and non statutory documents like the Oratea Structure Plan, the Mahurangi Action Plan, the Clevedon Village Sustainable Development plan, the Hibiscus Coast Gateway to mention only a few.</p>	<p>Places can be aided in becoming more distinctive with planning acting to foster and provide for local character.</p> <p>The utility of productive areas for a range of activities such as intensive farming, quarrying, and clean fills can be protected from the reverse sensitivity effects of lifestyle development in appropriate areas. Substantially settled areas with little potential as productive areas can similarly be protected from incompatible uses.</p> <p>In other areas policy packages will focus on remote rural character and the natural</p>	<p>Requires intensive multi-disciplinary technical planning, evaluation and consultation and coordination resources and major organisational commitment relative to the level of growth and economic activity outcomes that are likely to be delivered.</p> <p>Given limited resources and the likely timescale for changing the RMA documents of the rural area catchment by catchment, development pressure and land use change will march ahead of any such planning (and could potentially become frenzied as landowners look to secure development rights ahead of unknown future limitations).</p>

<p>However, a refresh of the statutory documents applying to many rural areas is envisaged with this approach.</p> <p>“No go” areas for development can be developed and integrated around development opportunities with a greater degree of fitness using this sort of approach than by identifying such matters at a regional or district wide level.</p> <p>Although proposals within this framework would need to fit within a framework of overarching policies/objectives/principles they would be highly responsive to place specific issues and constraints, look to balance development and environmental and conservation objectives on a case by case basis, look to combine catchment management with land and water use regulation, look for win-wins and would give locally driven issues greater prominence than a more general and even handed approach.</p>	<p>character of the coast, controlling erosion and sedimentation etc. depending on local characteristics.</p>	<p>Judges are frequently dismissive of plans that propose significantly different entitlements/limitations in ostensibly similar situations.</p> <p>Looking at the development capacity of individual areas in isolation may not support overall objectives for directing development away from areas with limited social and other infrastructure and into locations where growth will support the provision of civic services, infrastructure and public amenities.</p>
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8. Facilitating Rural Development Opportunities Approach

How it would be done	What this would be like	Obvious Pros and Cons
<p>Allow and provide a supportive policy framework for a range of rural growth opportunities with a certain level of proximity to existing centres and rapid transport or motorway links.</p> <p>Allow land close to the urban fringe to be used for countryside living and urban development, albeit at a density that preserves a degree of rural and non-urban character to allow high value activities such as lifestyle development to replace low value farming activity which could relocate to land in lower priced locations with less potential for land use conflict issues.</p> <p>This approach can incorporate an outcome focused policy framework shaped by design lead assessment criteria that can leverage environmental benefits and public access from private developers. It can offer choices other than those currently creating piece-meal land use changes such as farm parks, residential parks, rural hamlets, village extensions, business clusters, energy and research clusters and other development opportunities that could be self planned and managing. New</p>	<p>Developments in the rural area can be made to avoid or limit their visibility from principle public roads and vantage points to protect general impressions of the rural area.</p> <p>Providing sufficient incentives to promote the development of larger sites is likely mean significant levels of settlement and development in rural areas which could increase the burdens on water receiving environments and transport networks in rural areas.</p>	<p>Apart from setting the “playing field and goal posts” to manage development this is likely to require minimal planning and associated bureaucracy.</p> <p>Removing development constraints in the rural area is likely to accelerate change in sensitive environments which often have attractive landscapes.</p> <p>Having the provision of infrastructure follow market directed growth precludes efficiencies from supporting big ticket infrastructure with land use policy and makes Council vulnerable to spending public money supporting imprudent property speculation.</p> <p>Allowing piecemeal land releases is likely to make building resilient communities with well integrated social and civic infrastructure and a balance of high quality public spaces and open spaces harder to get right</p> <p>It would be wrong to assume that land owners will develop land at</p>

towns could also be part of this loose and flexible framework.

The role of the Council in this approach will be to underpin such processes by following development with suitable infrastructure, setting environmental "bottom lines" or "goalposts" and in determining particularly problematic or important "no go" areas where existing development rights can be purchased, or incentivised for transfer elsewhere.

For all their apparent advantages, most alternatives to more conventional urban development that get promoted for rural areas such as farm parks, managed residential parks, hamlets and other typologies are often targeted exclusively at the very wealthy.

rates that will increase supply fast enough to radically reduce the land component of property prices on the urban fringe, or that such price reductions at the city fringe will drive down house prices in other areas and create housing affordability.

Issues with speculation on rural land and a jumble of land use activities are likely to be significant.

Basic strategic policy building blocks common to all approach options.

Rural areas are important parts of the metropolitan framework providing important, scenic, employment, recreational, heritage and export benefits. They ensure Auckland has significant quantities of fresh food, and an ongoing supply of materials for construction and related industries, close to market. They also have environmental impacts which need to be carefully managed.

Facilities that primarily support urban residents should not be located in rural areas, including urban-sized schools, and significant retailing and offices.

Rural businesses including those not dependent on rural production are an important part of the fabric of rural areas and should be provided for in lower order policy. While providing for this, rules controlling the adverse effects visual of sprawl and adhoc development should be made as effective as possible.

Road sealing, new highway and motorway connections and other infrastructure decisions need to support the consolidated efficient and contained urban form objectives of the Auckland Plan and should avoid increasing development pressure on rural land.

Auckland's networks of local and regional parks need to continue to grow well in advance of the population and its incumbent pressures on rural land.

Need to stringently manage or where appropriate avoid urban development and land uses affecting threatened environments and habitats (e.g. sand dunes and wetlands) or areas with significant environmental value that are subject to development pressure such as, along the southern coast of the Manukau Harbour (between Clarks Beach and the Hingaia Peninsula) and parts of the Kaipara Harbour catchment, Whangateau and Mahurangi Harbour catchments. The need for specific controls on rural activities should be considered for these areas to achieve environmental outcomes.

Take a precautionary approach to identifying land release areas in terms of:

- natural hazards by seeking to ensure people and infrastructure are not placed at risk of increased frequency of extreme events e.g. flooding and sea level rise
- avoiding outstanding landscapes, areas with high natural character values and sensitivity
- Limiting opportunities for countryside living in and under pressure sensitive locations.

Council should develop and implement best practice toolkit for sustainable design for rural areas including low-impact development and green development practices which can be given effect to through unitary plan provisions¹¹.

The importance of the goal of preserving the productive potential of rural land and rural businesses in the region needs to be factored into processes for:

- identifying new growth areas
- setting rates policy
- determining the appropriate balancing of interests in making by-laws, RMA rules and other regulations.

Accommodate Auckland's future growth in satellite rural towns like Pukekohe, Warkworth and other centres (prioritised through other workstreams) as well as those within the main urban conurbation.

Further work:

- identify and refine unique issues and options applicable to island locations such as Great Barrier, Waiheke, Kawau Island, those that are privately owned and those dedicated to conservation activities.
- Identifying and defining the boundaries of "no go" areas for subdivision and development.

¹¹ Existing sources include the Country Side-Living Toolbox Volumes 1, 2 and 3 for stormwater management, which is incorporated into the Waitakere District Plan and to some the NSCC District Plan.

- Determining and quantifying environmental bottom-lines for rural areas.
- Evaluating routes for ecological corridors, walking and cycle paths and other rural networks.
- Spatially determining a future zoning framework for rural areas.
- Evaluating the suitability of specific rural areas for significant new settlements.
- Costing the implications of a "greenbelt" or an expansionist regime.
- Obtaining and monitoring spatial data on the locations of rural businesses.

Maps:

Land Cover on Rural Land (LCDB2 polygons aggregated to 6 land use categories) – 1 map of the north and west A1, 1 of the HG Islands and 1 of the south (all A1's)

Property Size Distribution – same 3 map areas and scales

Versatile Soils in Rural Areas (Land Use Classes 1 to and 3) – region can be covered in 1 A1 or 3 A3 Maps

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Key Sources of Information

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APPENDIX 1

Current State of Rural Policy and Legislation

Key components of Auckland's current rural policy include:

- A metropolitan urban limit intended to achieve an accessible, cohesive compact city, protect the environment, reduce infrastructure costs, and move to accommodate growth needs. This is managed through requirements for non-statutory structure plan processes and statutory plan change processes.¹²
- Urban development is contained, within the metropolitan urban limits and the limits of rural and coastal settlements.
- Countryside living is subject to constraints as to location, scale and extent to limit adverse effects.
- Policy directives look to protect a selection of outstanding environmental features (outstanding natural landscapes, natural features, areas of significant biodiversity, high quality streams and coastal protection areas), maintain the quality of other environments, and enhance degraded environments where possible. The range of methods for this include rules and standards in regional and district plans, public ownership, restrictive trusts and covenants.

RPS Proposed Change 6: *Giving Effect to the Regional Growth Strategy and Integrating Landuse and Transport*, (notified 2005) directs Councils in Auckland to integrate their land transport and land use provisions and ensure they are consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy, ensure they give effect to its Growth Concept, and contribute to the land transport and land use matters. Change 6 involves re-casting the overview and strategic direction of the RPS and strengthening provisions that manage the form and location of growth and enforce urban containment.

Although subject to potentially significant change through appeals, policy directives include the following:

- urban activities are to be contained within the MUL and within rural and coastal settlements, except where it is demonstrated that there is insufficient capacity within the MUL or rural or coastal settlement limits in the north/west sector;
- Further Countryside Living will only be provided where it is demonstrated that there is insufficient capacity in the sector to cater for expected growth and through a prescribed structure planning process;
- proposals to establish or develop new settlements can be appropriate where they utilise existing rural capacity.

Notwithstanding the policy environment, in rural areas like Rodney and Franklin, the proportion of building consents for new dwellings in rural areas over the last 10 years has been around 40%, varying between 32% and 46%. It is a similar situation with the number of new lots being created through subdivision.¹³ A frequent criticism of regional policy was that it seemed to take a somewhat "black and white" view of growth management in defining all urban activities (restaurants, child care centres, film production, private schools etc) in the rural area as undesirable.

The Franklin District Growth Strategy follows the regional theme of containment and intensification of urban development by concentrating most growth within the existing urban boundaries of Pukekohe, Buckland, Waiuku, Tuakau, Pokeno¹⁴, Patumahoe and Kingseat while limiting subdivision elsewhere. It

¹² The "iron clad" boundary described by some commentators, hasn't quite lived up to its reputation as no requests from territorial authorities for MUL shifts were ever refused and innumerable urban activities and countryside living developments were consented outside of the MUL without significant trouble. There has however also been substantial comment on the statutory processes for changes being prohibitively difficult, expensive, slow and uncertain, and of the obstacles to consenting businesses beyond the MUL proving to be a substantial deterrent.

¹³ Rodney District Council Rural Strategy Summary Background Issues Paper, October 2009, p27

¹⁴ Pokeno is now part of the Waikato region following the 1 November 2010 boundary changes.

also proposes to provide additional countryside living in Hunua and Paerata and coastal living at Clarks Beach and Waiiau Beach. Intensive redevelopment is proposed for central Pukekohe and redevelopment of parts of Waiuku and Tuakau.

Planning Rodney identified broad and loosely defined bands of Agricultural Production Areas, Mixed Rural Activity belts and Green Buffer Areas between them and proposes to increase the scope of activities and settlement in the Mixed Activity belts. It identifies a conceptual future role for each of the settlements in the district clarifying the extent to which they should grow and be serviced. The majority of growth is to be focussed in the existing urban centres of Warkworth, Orewa, Silverdale, Whangaparaoa Kumeu and Helensville, but it also within identifies rural centres of Snells Beach/Algies Bay, Matakana, Riverhead, Waimauku, Kaukapakapa and Waiwera for considerable urban growth and rural service villages of Kaipara Flats, Puhoi, Tomarata, Pakiri, Taporā, Tauhoa, Coatesville, Wainui, Dairy Flat, Taupaki, Waitoki and Woodhill for modest local growth consistent with rural services.

The Rodney Rural Strategy 2010 contains a set of specific initiatives such as tailored management approaches to areas with Mixed Rural Production Environments, Rural Lifestyle Environments, Islands Environments, Bush Living Areas, Rural Coastal Areas, and follows Planning Rodney's approach to centres growth. It also has proposals for improving development location, changing the approach to subdivision and natural area protection, protecting landscapes, rural rates policy, rural infrastructure, improving biodiversity and for Maori owned land.

Special Legislation

A number of local Acts or special issue legislation also applies to various rural areas of Auckland. These include:

Waitakere Ranges Heritage Act 2008:

The Waitakere Ranges Heritage Act 2008 (Ranges Act) and the identified Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area it creates, encompasses some 27720Ha of land, some 17000Ha of which is the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. The remaining approximately 10,000Ha is privately owned in 10,000 parcels with some 4500 existing dwellings and some 17,500 residents (at 2001).

The legislation responds to concerns about the adverse cumulative effects that urban growth is having on the natural, rural and coastal landscape and the ecological, historic, and cultural heritage of the area, and the difficulties in managing such effects under the current RMA based regulatory framework. The Act recognises the national, regional and local significance of the Waitakere Ranges, foothills and coastal areas and promotes long-term protection and enhancement of this area and its important heritage features for present and future generations, while enabling the area to be lived and worked in. It develops a future benchmark of what the people of the Waitakere ranges would like their communities and environment to be in 10, 50 and 100 years time, (through Local Area Plans (LAPs) to protect, restore and enhance the existing character and 'heritage features' of the communities and manage the transition from the city's urban areas to the Heritage Area's rural, bush and coastal areas through goal orientated planning.

Three Local Area Plans (to implement the Act at the local level) have been developed and approved to date, all of which are located in the Foothills area of the Waitakere Ranges which is experiencing considerable urbanisation pressures:

- Oratia
- Waiatarua
- Henderson Valley/Opanuku

A sequenced rollout of further LAPs development and implementation across the Coastal Villages, Rural and Bush communities of the Heritage Area was planned by the previous Waitakere City Council and can be integrated into the new Auckland Council's broader work programmes.

Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000:

The purpose of the HGMP Act is to integrate management and objectives of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands and catchments, establish the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park, and recognise the relationship of tangata whenua with the Gulf and its islands.

The Act provides integrated management of the Gulf across 21 other statutes by requiring that all persons carrying out functions for the Gulf under those Acts must have particular regard to sections 7 and 8 of the HGMPA. This means decision makers must address the national significance of the Hauraki Gulf and:

- 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 are matters of national significance.
- The life-supporting capacity of the environment of the Gulf and its islands includes the capacity: to provide for
 - the historic, traditional, cultural, and spiritual relationship of the tangata whenua of the Gulf with the Gulf and its islands and
 - the social, economic, recreational, and cultural well-being of people and communities:
- to use the resources of the Gulf by the people and communities of the Gulf and New Zealand for economic activities and recreation
- to maintain the soil, air, water, and ecosystems of the Gulf.

This includes addressing management objectives for Gulf, its islands and catchments including:

- protection and, where appropriate, the enhancement of the life-supporting capacity of the environment of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and catchments
- protection and, where appropriate, the enhancement of the natural, historic, and physical resources of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and catchments
- protection and, where appropriate, the enhancement of those natural, historic, and physical resources (including kaimoana) of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and catchments with which tangata whenua have an historic, traditional, cultural, and spiritual relationship
- protection of the cultural and historic associations of people and communities in and around the Hauraki Gulf with its natural, historic, and physical resources
- maintenance and, where appropriate, the enhancement of the contribution of the natural, historic, and physical resources of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and catchments to the social and economic well-being of the people and communities of the Hauraki Gulf and New Zealand
- maintenance and, where appropriate, the enhancement of the natural, historic, and physical resources of the Hauraki Gulf, its islands, and catchments, which contribute to the recreation and enjoyment of the Hauraki Gulf for the people and communities of the Hauraki Gulf and New Zealand.

Rural Structure Plan Areas:

All of the former LGO's with rural land have developed a number of rural structure plans for areas within their district, usually based on catchments.

These structure plans usually take a catchment management or landscape carrying capacity approach to the management of further development within the catchment, and usually allocate additional subdivision opportunities on the basis of this carrying capacity, or an assumed future carrying capacity if certain environmental enhancements are carried out such as riparian and landscape planting and so on.

They are generally used in areas of strong pressure for Countryside Living or Urban development to better manage the pressure these areas are under, while still maintaining rural character and avoiding adverse environmental effects.

Iwi Management Plans:

A number of Iwi have developed Iwi Management Plans (IMPs) for their rohe. The RMA requires that TAs consider IMPs (where they exist) when developing or reviewing their District Plans, in addition to the general requirement to consult.

Treaty Settlements:

Settlements are likely to involve resolution of issues of control, management and policy making for a range of issues of interest to the various tangata whenua groups in the Auckland Region, as well as transfer of Crown land holdings to iwi control. The settlements are also likely to involve cash settlements, some of which will no doubt be used for land and property purchases on the open market.

This means that Maori are soon to become a much more significant player in the region, though increases in the ability to influence decision making (though management actions and policy development) as well as direct action through their new land holdings and cash reserves. Much of the Crown land (outside of the CMA) in the region is located in the rural area.¹⁵

The current Tamaki Collective Treaty Settlement process currently underway is likely to considerably alter the level of Maori involvement, interest and capacity in land and coastal marine area management particularly at the decision making level.

Statutory Acknowledgement Areas

A number of treaty settlements have been concluded in the Auckland Region and have resulted in the creation of Statutory Acknowledgement Areas. Statutory acknowledgements are statements in Treaty of Waitangi settlements between Crown and iwi that are intended to recognise the mana of tangata whenua groups in relation to identified sites and areas.

Statutory acknowledgements are an acknowledgement by the Crown of the particular cultural, spiritual, historic, and traditional association of an iwi with each statutory site and area.

The locations for statutory acknowledgement areas are shown on Survey Office (S.O.) plans. While these plans do not indicate the precise boundaries of the statutory acknowledgement area, they do indicate the location as nearly as possible.

Statutory acknowledgements are only over Crown land and may apply to land, rivers, lakes, wetlands, a landscape feature, or a particular part of the coastal marine area. Where a statutory acknowledgement relates to a river, lake, wetland or coastal area, it only applies to that part of the bed in Crown ownership or control.

There are also some settlement negotiations underway where a final settlement has not been yet reached, but statutory acknowledgements are already in effect through agreements in principle.

In the Auckland Region these include¹⁶:

- Te Uri o Hau Settlement Act 2002 - 6 Statutory acknowledgement areas
- Ngati Whatua o Orakei Agreement in Principle - 6 Statutory acknowledgement areas
- Additional areas are likely to be created through the current Tamaki settlement process.

¹⁵ See <http://www.ots.govt.nz/>

¹⁶ <http://www.qualityplanning.org.nz/plan-development/structure-organisation-plans/statutory-acknowledgements.php>

