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| PART 2 | BACKGROUND TO THE RURAL SECTION |
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BACKGROUND TO THE RURAL SECTION

- 2.1** The Resource Management Act 1991 directs that integrated management of the effects of the use, development and protection of land and resources throughout the District be achieved. The Council considers that this can be achieved by maintaining the distinction in planning terms between town and country and by ensuring that the activities permitted in the rural area do not adversely affect the urban area and vice versa.
- 2.2** Partly because of this, but also as a matter of convenience and efficiency, the Papakura District Council decided to proceed with the preparation of a District Plan in sections. This section, Section Two, relates to the rural part of the District. Proposals for the urban part of the District are contained in Section Three, General Provisions One, contained in Section One. Although the urban and rural sections of the District Plan have been produced separately, together they form a co-ordinated District Plan which will provide for the management of resources in Papakura District for the next ten years.
- 2.3 THE AUCKLAND REGIONAL POLICY STATEMENT, GROWTH STRATEGY AND RELATED DOCUMENTS**
- 2.3.1** The Papakura District Plan was prepared at the same time as the Auckland Regional Council prepared its Regional Policy Statement. According to section 74 of the Resource Management Act 1991 a territorial local authority shall have regard to any proposed regional policy statement on a matter of regional significance in respect of its district. The Council has been mindful of that direction in the preparation of this plan.
- The Auckland Regional Growth Strategy**
- 2.3.2** The Auckland Regional Growth Strategy (the Growth Strategy) has determined that the District will play a larger role in accommodating urban development in Southern Auckland. The full implications of this determination are set out in Section One, at Part 4 and at Part 5.
- 2.3.3** The urbanisation of Hingaia and Takanini will proceed in the context of structure plans prepared for each area. The strategic approach for the ongoing sustainable management of such areas is set out in Sections One and Three of the Plan. As and when rural areas are rezoned for urban activity, this Section of the Plan will no longer apply to them.

2.4 PAPAKURA RURAL STUDY

2.4 As a preliminary to the preparation of this Plan a rural study was conducted in Papakura District. The objectives of this study were “to identify the role of rural land in the District” and “to prepare a district wide rural ordinance(s) to be included in each of the (three) existing District Schemes”.

2.4.2 The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) was engaged as part of the rural study to report on the agricultural opportunities and constraints present in the District which could be considered in the preparation of suitable rural ordinances. More particularly, MAF was asked by the Council to look at soils, land use potential, minimum lot sizes for various uses, land values and a consideration of the factors needed to encourage productive land use. The report from the Ministry is part of the background information which was used by the Council in preparing the strategy outlined in this plan.

2.4.3 A landscape assessment of rural Papakura, a report on geotechnical constraints and a subsidiary report from MAF commenting on rural issues were also commissioned as part of the rural study.

These reports also provide further justification for the Papakura rural strategy.

2.4.4 The main findings of the rural study can be summarised as follows:

- The role of the rural area is related to its proximity to the Auckland metropolitan area and its productive nature.
- The location of the rural area leads to a demand for rural lifestyle properties.
- Given the productive nature of the lowland areas, there is a need to balance the demand for subdivision and development against the protection of productive rural land.
- The open rural character of the rural area should be retained.
- The proximity of the rural area of Papakura to the urban metropolis of Auckland, and economic factors affecting the use of rural land have affected not only the existing pattern of activities in the rural area, but also the range of options which are available to Papakura in planning for the future of the area.

2.5 MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES STUDY

As part of the preparation of this Plan, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has conducted a study of the current and potential rural land uses in the Papakura District. This study revealed a number of significant facts which influence the range of realistic resource management options which are available. In summary, these are as follows:

- dairy farming in particular, and pastoral farming generally, is a significant though declining activity in the lowland parts of rural Papakura. Due to the high value of the land it is increasingly difficult for new farmers to raise the capital required to purchase sufficient land for a viable dairy or pastoral farming unit.
- the concept of allowing subdivisions based on independent economic units has failed to ensure the land is actively used for productive purposes.
- with a few limitations to cultivation and drainage, the majority of soils in the Hingaia, Karaka, Drury and Ardmore areas are suitable for intensive pastoral and horticultural production.
- the mild climate allows high winter stocking rates.

- horse owners and trainers have been attracted to the Takanini area due to the availability of facilities and services. The horse industry is a significant contributor to the District economy.
- the minimum areas of land required for long term economic viability, for various rural activities, are presently understood to be of the order shown below:

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| orchard crops | 10-12 hectares |
| covered crops | 2000 – 3000 m ² (but on 1 hectare property) |
| horse training | 1-2 hectares |
| agistment | 4 – 6 hectares |
| seasonal dairy | 65 hectares |
| winter milk dairy | 44 hectares + |
- Papakura District contains 8000 hectares of Class One soils (2/3 of District) of which approximately 2000 ha is urbanised. The 6000 ha of Class One soils which remain in rural use comprise only 0.23% of the Class One soils in New Zealand.
- the areas south of Drury, Takanini, and to a lesser extent the Karaka and Hingaia areas, have been largely fragmented into 2 hectare to 4 hectares lots. While the land holding pattern in Karaka is still weighted towards holdings 20 hectares and greater, underlying this is a pattern of Certificates of Title which is more fragmented. The Ardmore/Clevedon Valley area is of a different character with relatively larger holdings. Similarly, the Hunua hill country is held in larger lots.
- because of difficulties of soil sterilisation, soil-less media and hydroponics systems (which are not dependent on the quality of the in-situ soil) are becoming more popular. These systems also have advantages of flexibility.
- the availability of water supplies is likely to limit the potential for intensive cropping in some areas within the next 10 years.
- education of small block holders regarding animal and crop husbandry, crop management, weed control and many other every day aspects of rural life would assist to increase the efficiency of agricultural production.
- the minimum area for a small grazing lot to allow flexibility to rotate stock and rest pasture is 4 hectares of useable land.
- many small farms are not necessarily economic units but this does not mean that they need be, or are, unproductive.
- land values are generally too high to permit large scale forestry or other forms of extensive agriculture.
- beef cattle are pastured on virtually every pastoral property, either as sole use, or in conjunction with other stock.
- there has been a recent influx of new greenhouse growers who choose to grow vegetables as their first crop.

This summary gives a picture of what is happening at present in rural Papakura and focuses attention on the realistic opportunities and the constraints which need to be taken account of in the Plan.

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