

**PART 4 THE RURAL STRATEGY**

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**4.1 DESCRIPTION**

**4.1.1** The draft rural study report drew on the information presented in all of the associated reports including the identification of the resource management issues, in producing a proposed planning strategy.

**4.1.2** The rural strategy identified in the Rural Study gives priority to retaining and enhancing the character and productivity of the rural area while accommodating further development and providing for a range of lifestyle opportunities.

The strategy provides a background and context for the Plan but the Plan contains more than simply the elements of the Rural Strategy. The Strategy thus has three elements:

- Protecting productive land
- Retaining the rural character
- Providing a range of rural lifestyles

While the objectives and policies in this Plan are aimed at implementing this strategy as a matter of priority it should not be assumed that these are the only important elements or that the Plan is restricted only to the three strategy elements. The objectives, policies and rules deal also with other matters which are complementary to the strategy. Examples of these matters include the protection of Ardmore Aerodrome, the protection of coastal margins and riparian strips, the protection of indigenous bush, and development of mineral resources.

**4.2 EVALUATION OF STRATEGY**

The three key elements of the rural strategy were evaluated as follows:

**4.2.1 Protecting the Productive Land**

(i) *How necessary is this in achieving the purpose of the Act?*

The technical information from MAF is that there is a high proportion of soils suitable for intensive food production in the District. In that respect the soils represent a resource not only at a district level but on a regional basis. It is therefore considered wise to provide for the actual and potential productive use of this land to be continued. In this manner the sustainability of that resource can be achieved and flexibility for future land use actions maintained. It will provide for the more efficient use and development of the natural and physical resource the soils represent and recognise their finite characteristics.

(ii) *What alternative means are there to achieve the purpose of the Act?*

One approach to protection is by way of zoning different parts of the rural area for particular reasons and adopting land subdivision controls as the principal control to achieve the Council's objectives. This is a proven technique. Another means is through the rating system whereby landowners of smaller blocks are levied higher than those on larger blocks. This is not an option which is favoured, it being generally untested, not as direct as subdivision controls and not as easy to administer by the Council. Another means is by the Council considering every subdivision or development proposal to assess its compatibility with its objectives. This is not practicable or desirable from an administrative point of view and some direction or controls are considered to be necessary.

(iii) *Reasons for the protection of the productive land include:*

- to maintain the resource and not preclude its continuing or future use for rural production;
- to provide for the efficient use and development of the natural and physical resource the soils represent;
- to maintain some control over areas to be developed for residential purpose in terms of utility servicing, landscape and general consideration of effects of further development to any intensive degree in the rural area.

*Reasons against protection of the productive land include:*

- landowners not having the opportunity to administer their land as they see fit;
- debate over what is productive and what is not in terms of being productive for certain activities and not for others and the ability to "upgrade" the productivity of soils with application of fertilisers etc;
- not allowing the demand for rural lifestyle sites to be satisfied.

#### **4.2.2 Retention of the Rural Character**

(i) *How necessary is this in achieving the purposes of the Act?*

The Act has an emphasis on promoting the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. The rural character is a natural resource which can justifiably be identified and managed in a sustainable manner for the benefit of current and future generations.

It should be stressed, however, that there are many kinds of rural character. The rural character of an extensive pastoral farming area, for instance, is quite different from the character of an intensive horticultural area.

An important part of the rural character of Papakura is the indigenous vegetation, particularly in the Hunua area. The Act refers to the need to protect such areas.

The rural character can be maintained by directing the demands for rural-residential development to areas where the concern for the rural character is not so great, including areas where such development has already occurred. It can also be assisted by setting subdivision standards that do not provide for the rural

area to be subdivided and developed to an extent that this rural character is lost. Providing incentives and rules to protect the bush is another important means of maintaining the rural character.

(ii) *What other means are there to achieve the purpose of the Act?*

One means is to have a moratorium on future subdivision but this would not provide for subdivision for bona fide rural production purposes. The rating approach outlined above could be used but is not favoured for the reasons stated. Subdivision for economic rural purposes only could be provided for but this approach has been shown not to work successfully from current and recent subdivision practice.

(iii) *Reasons for the retention of the rural character include:*

- public submissions seek it;
- retains urban/rural contrast;
- provides relief to otherwise urbanised areas;
- retains flexibility for rural uses which require larger blocks;
- it is an identifiable natural resource which can be sustained for the benefit of future generations;
- avoids future pressures for the provision of utility services which are generally uneconomic to provide in the rural areas.

*Reasons against retention of the rural character include:*

- landowners not having the opportunity to administer their land as they see fit;
- may not allow the demand for rural lifestyle sites to be satisfied;
- it is not necessary because on a regional scale there is plenty of land having a rural character in relatively close proximity to Papakura.

#### **4.2.3 Opportunity to Provide for a Range of Rural Lifestyles**

(i) *How necessary is this in achieving the purposes of the Act?*

Section 5 of the Resource Management Act 1991 refers to social, economic and cultural wellbeing of people and communities. Providing a range of rural lifestyles is in accordance with the purpose of the Act, as expressed in section 5.

Also in terms of the emphasis of the Act on sustainable management of resources, providing for a range of rural lifestyles is necessary in order to avoid indiscriminate subdivision and development which could result in a compromising of the natural and physical resources of the District. It is considered preferable to provide some direction on how the demand for rural lifestyle can be met so that it can be accommodated without compromising other resource management objectives for the District.

(ii) *What other means are there to achieve the purpose of the Act?*

One means is through the rating system whereby a person desiring to reside in the rural area would be rated higher than those carrying on rural production in the rural area and those residing in the urban area. The experience with the “bonding arrangement” on intensive rural lots has shown that financial disincentives do not work satisfactorily and are often simply incorporated into the sale price of the land. This rating approach is also untested and not as direct, or as easy for the Council to administer, as a zoning and associated rule subdivision control approach.

(iii) *Reasons for providing the opportunity for a range of rural lifestyles include:*

- enables control over where part-time farming and rural-residential activities occur
- provides for the demand to be met
- allows for rural lifestyle development to be directed away from those parts of the rural area sought to be utilised in a different manner, perhaps being retained for productive use or for rural character considerations
- allows for rural lifestyle development to be directed to or away from those parts of the rural area where further development should be either encouraged or discouraged depending on considerations of existing development, landscape, geotechnical, flooding potential, soils etc
- provides greater certainty to landowners regarding land potential

*Reasons against providing the opportunity for a range of rural lifestyles include:*

- maintains rural land for rural activities only
- means demands for utility services are not increased in the rural areas where generally they cannot be economically provided

## **4.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY**

**4.3.1** The three part strategy as discussed above is sought to be implemented through the application of specific zones to particular areas with those zones being based on the features and constraints of the areas and appropriate provisions and controls being formulated in each zone. The objectives, policies and rules set out in this plan address the resource management issues which have been identified in the plan.

**4.3.2** The rural study report proposed as a major element of the strategy, a zoning approach in order to provide some certainty of activity and associated controls. It was considered that this is a tried and proven technique which allows the inclusion of performance standards where applicable in terms of regulating the effects of activities.

**4.3.3** The second main element in the implementation of the strategy is the subdivisional provisions. It was clear, from the investigations carried out as part of the rural study and public submission, that the subdivision regime is an important factor in the strategy.

**4.3.4** Alternative subdivision approaches were considered. These are outlined in the following section.