

Kapiti Coast District Council Proposed District Plan

Waikanae North Eco Hamlet – Landscape Assessment Report

November 2015

isthmus

DOCUMENT CONTROL

REV NO.	DATE	REVISION DETAILS	AUTHOR	QA
0	29/09/2015	Draft	LR	BC
1	26/11/2015	Final Draft	LR	KCDC

WAIKANAĒ NORTH ECO HAMLET – LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT REPORT

Task

Undertake a landscape assessment review of the *Visually Sensitive Areas* and *Visually Sensitive Ridgelines* identified on the Structure Plan that are on the Aaron and Michael Jack's (submitter No8) property in the Ngarara Dunes area.

Provide recommendations on whether the *Visually Sensitive Areas* and *Ridgelines* on the property should be amended, with reasons taking into account the proposed District Plan (PDP) policy framework for subdivision and development Waikanae North Eco Hamlet (WNEH) zone.

Landscape Assessment Review Methodology

Document Review

Review of the submission and further engagement with the submitter to date, relevant background studies and sections of the PDP and Submitter Engagement Version (SEV) amendments. GIS mapping to confirm WNEH Structure Plan areas and the redefinition sought by the submitter (See **Figures 1-3**).

Field work

Visit to the site and the surrounding area on August 31st and preparation of stitched photographs (as shown in **Figures 4-14**) from marked locations including the Pharazyn Reserve.

Follow up desktop review and analysis

Carry out analysis to confirm the existing development potential and the potential implications of the changes sought by the submitter. Confirm relevant assessment factors and review the WNEH Structure Plan boundaries.

Recommendations

Map recommended changes to Structure Plan maps with supporting rationale (see **Figure 15**).

Background

The Jacks Property (9.83ha) is located at 304 Ngarara Road within the WNEH area. The Structure Plan, as included in the PDP Appendix 7.4 (see **Figure 2 + 3**), identifies approximately 18.5% of the property as *Visually Sensitive Ridgelines*, 14.2 % as *Visually Sensitive Areas* and 12.3% as *Less Suitable Areas*, over which additional development restrictions apply. The remaining 55% of the property is classified as *Suitable Areas*; able to be developed under permitted activity standards. The majority of the areas of *Suitable* land are located near Ngarara Road. *Suitable* land adjacent to the Pharazyn Reserve, providing a westerly aspect and the potential for views out to the coast, is limited to approximately 9,500m² (the total area of *Suitable* land is 54,463m²).

The dune land forms on the property are part of the sequence known as the Ngarara Dunes that extend from Waimeha Stream to Te Hapua. Most of the land in this sequence is undulating and generally less than 25m (asl) with mixed rural residential landuse, some areas of forestry and regenerating indigenous vegetation. Low lying areas to the east and west of the dunes feature wetlands and dune lakelets including the Pharazyn reserve wetland directly to the west of the Jacks property and the Kawakahia wetland to the south west.

The landforms on the Jack's property are more pronounced, with the highest part of the dune rising to 35m (asl) and other knolls above 25m (asl). Existing development is limited to a single storey residential dwelling and implement sheds located on flatter areas near Ngarara Road. An unsealed track is used to access the top of the dune to service an existing communications tower. The lattice tower is 32m high (as noted in the submission) and the associated building is approximately 3 x 5m and 3m high. These structures are located in a separate lot. A concrete water tank is located near the tower. Recent harvesting has cleared the property of its predominant cover of exotic plantation forestry. Areas around the dwelling and in the north-west corner of the property are currently used for grazing.

Views towards the site, from public roads and beach areas, are limited due to the intervention of the dune landforms and existing vegetation. The most open views of the site are experienced from the Pharazyn Reserve, as shown in the representative view in **Figure 13**. Residents of Waikanae, to the north of Te Moana Rd (as can be seen in the site photograph **Figure 5**) are also likely to have clear views of the site from windows and parts of their property that have an open aspect to the north east. The communications tower can be seen from greater distances due to its height. The upper portion of the tower is visible from a number of locations along the beach near Waikanae and Peka Peka. A greater portion of the tower and the top of the Ngarara dunes can also be seen from a distance along elevated inland roads; such as Huia St at the base of the Hemi Matenga escarpment (as shown in **Figure 14**).

The WNEH Structure Plan area (310ha) is located in the Ngarara Dunes between State Highway 1 and Paetawa Road. The Structure Plan was notified in the November 2012 PDP and follows on from:

- the Waikanae North Urban Edge plan change 79 (operative March 2010). This established the WNEH Zone - to the north of the urban edge;
- the Ngarara Farm private plan change 80 (operative September 2010). This established the Ngarara zone to the south of the urban edge and a structure plan for the *Ngarara Precinct* within the WNEH zone; as set out in Appendix 2 of the operative District Plan (operative DP); and;
- Chapter 7 Rural Subdivision and Development Policy 6b) of the operative DP. This policy established a non-complying activity status for subdivision in the WNEH zone requiring future development through a structure plan and provisions that give effect to low impact design principles.

Work to inform the structure plan was carried out by Council during 2011 and 2012; as is documented in the 'Waikanae North Eco Hamlet Precinct Draft Structure Plan' report (dated March 2012). This background study included analysis of existing GIS data, operative DP maps and provisions to identify constraints¹, a draft structure plan and provisions for the Proposed

¹ Constraints analysed and mapped in the study:

- Dominant ridgelines and visually prominent dunes/hills/areas
- Ecological areas and buffer
- Streams and open drains
- Ecological links
- Archaeological and cultural sites
- Peat areas
- Transmission lines
- Expressway corridor

District Plan (PDP). The constraints are identified and mapped through desktop analysis include:

“Dominant ridgelines and visually prominent dunes/hills/areas - these areas are highly visible from the surrounding area. Because of their location, elevation and visibility, development on these dominant ridgelines is considered inappropriate. Further visually prominent dunes/hills/areas were identified and illustrated on the constraints map. It was considered that development would need to be sensitively designed because of the elevation of the area.”

Visually prominent areas/sensitive areas are further qualified as:

“The areas below the dominant ridgelines where development should be sensitively designed to ensure they blend into or do not dominate the landscape when viewed from the coastal environment.”

The draft structure plan included in the report identified *suitable, non suitable and sensitive areas* for development. Dominant ridgeline areas were identified as part of the *non suitable areas* for development (along with ecosites, the expressway designation, etc). *Dominant ridgeline* areas were located above the 25m contour. *Sensitive areas* are identified on the lower slopes of the dunes between the *dominant ridgeline area* and the 15 - 20m contour.

Proposed District Plan – Submitter Engagement Version (SEV June 16th)

The WNEH structure plan is proposed under Chapter 7- Rural Eco-Hamlet Zone; including areas north of the urban edge at Waikanae (the WNEH) and at Otaki where:

“Development should entail minimal disturbance to the natural contours and any significant cultural and ecological features in the area. While some development is intended to be clustered, the overall density of development should be relatively low so as to retain the areas sense of openness.” (Zone Description, SEV pg 7-3)

Policy 7.17 sets out a framework of principles for development in the Rural Eco - Hamlet zone integrating changes made through the submission response process. These principles require subdivision and development to be well integrated into the environment with minimal disturbance to existing landforms and natural features. Design measures must ensure buildings, infrastructure and landscapes protect rural character and open space and provide for areas of productive land use as well as avoiding visual prominence and loss of visual privacy.

The rules that implement this policy require development to occur in accordance with the areas identified in the structure plan map for the WNEH (as annotated in **Figure 2**) This map distinguishes:

- *Visually Sensitive Ridgelines* -above the 30m and 25m contour (identified as Dominant Ridgelines in the 2012 report);
- *Visually Sensitive Areas* - between 15-25m (identified as Sensitive Areas in the 2012 report) on the western face of the dune and 20-25m on the eastern face of the dune;
- *Less Suitable Areas* (the balance of Unsuitable Areas identified in the 2012 report); and

- Suitable Areas (as per the 2012 report)

Suitable Areas

Rule 7A.1.10 Permitted activity standards provides for structures, roads and associated infrastructure (buildings and development) within the *Suitable Areas*; providing standards relating to landscape, renewable electricity, building location, material palette and combined gross floor area requirements (150m²/lot) are met. Further Rural Zone permitted activity standards (Rule 7A.1.4) would restrict building heights to 8m for habitable buildings and 10m for accessory farm buildings.

All other development in *Suitable Areas* is discretionary under Rule 7A.4.1.

Visually Sensitive Areas

Development within *Visually Sensitive Areas* is provided for as a restricted discretionary activity where the permitted activity standards are met plus further restrictions on building height (to be no more than 6m) and exterior materials (Rule 7A.3.8). Rule 7A.5.11 would also apply i.e. new development would need to be located at least 3m below the upper edge of the *Visually Sensitive Area* and not project above the *Visually Sensitive Ridgeline*.

All other development in *Visually Sensitive Areas* is non-complying under Rule 7A.5.10.

Less Suitable Areas

Activities within *Less Suitable Areas* are Discretionary under Rule 7A.4.1

Visually Sensitive Ridgelines

New roads, including associated infrastructure, and new and relocatable structures which are located up to 3metres below or are above the *Visually Sensitive Ridgeline* are non-complying (Rule 7A.5.11).

Subdivision

Under Rules 7A.3.2.1 and 7A.3.2.6 subdivision within the WNEH is a restricted discretionary activity provided it complies with the relevant standards, including a minimum lot size of 4,000m² and a minimum average of 1.5ha (in this context). A subdivision encumbrance is required on the title of each new lot, prohibiting further subdivision.

Other Proposed District plan overlays (SEV).

Other aspects of the PDP that are relevant to this assessment include:

- Dominant Ridgelines and Dominant Dunes, identified through a desktop exercise across the District. These have been deleted from the planning maps in the SEV.
- Outstanding natural landscapes (ONL) and special amenity landscapes (SAL) identified on the planning maps and controlled through provisions in Chapter 3. Natural Environment. Values identified in each landscape area are detailed in Schedule 3.4 and 3.5 of the SEV. This includes the Ngarara Dune ONL identified over the Jacks property.

The Ngarara Dune ONL is currently being reviewed by Isthmus in response to submissions and further submissions on the PDP. Draft recommendations, to be confirmed through further consultation, identify the Jacks property as part of the Ngarara Dunes SAL. Under the SEV, the rules relating to SAL areas have been deleted. As such, resource consent applications for discretionary and non-complying activities under the provisions of the zones underlying the SALs would be assessed in terms of their ability to maintain or enhance the identified SAL landscape values.

- Land in the Ngarara Precinct adjacent to the Jacks property is in the Kawakahia Eco Hamlet. The Structure Plan for this area (PDP Rural Zone Appendix 7.2) provides for light commercial /tourism opportunities including a retreat centre and cabins with access to Waikanae Beach via an upgrade to the existing causeway across the wetland. Anticipated form would retain 'buffer areas' as open space – around the kawakahia wetland and on the steeply sloped knoll above the 15m contour, i.e. the Visually Sensitive Areas and Ridgelines. Up to 20 households and 20 lots can be provided for in the remaining areas providing the general eco hamlet development and subdivision permitted standards are met. Principles set for the Totara Dunes neighborhood in the Ngarara Structure Plan area (within the urban edge) retain open space - forest over the steeper land immediately adjacent to the Ngarara precinct as part of a bush corridor but with more intensive development provided for on dune ridgeline areas.

Mackays to Peka Peka road of national significance (M2PP)

Now under construction, this development generally follows the 'expressway designation' in the *operative* District Plan and impacts on both the Ngarara Precinct and WNEH Structure Plan areas (outside of the Jack's property).

Submission and further consultation to date

Matters raised in the Jacks submission (No8) address a number of the planning provisions in Chapter 7 as well as the extent of the *Visually Sensitive Ridgeline and Visually Sensitive Areas* identified on their land.

In summary, they sought:

- Removal of the requirement for new buildings in the WNEH to be screened from the beach and the State Highway. This change has been included in the SEV along with the removal of the restricted discretionary activity standard 7A.3.6 (f).

~~“the location of the building area on each lot and access shall ensure that buildings will not be visible when viewed from neighbouring lots (neighbours to the parent lot) of (f) public roads (which are not created by the subdivision).”~~

- Redefinition of the area identified as a *Visually Sensitive Ridgeline* and the removal of *Visually Sensitive Areas*; as shown in **Figure 2**. In summary, this would reduce 'non complying activity land' by approximately half (from 17,548m² to 9,328m²) to that generally above 30m and immediately alongside the existing farm track and the communications tower. *Suitable* land would increase by 22,465m²; over approximately 78% of the property.
- The minimum average lot size to be 1.5ha, as amended in the SEV.
- Review of waterways incorrectly identified as streams rather than drains, to provide for reduced setback requirements; as amended in the SEV.
- Removal of non complying activity status for development in *Visually Sensitive Areas* and the prohibited activity status for development in *Visually Sensitive Ridgelines*. Amendments to the SEV establish non complying activity status for *Visually Sensitive Ridgelines* areas and restricted discretionary status for *Visually Sensitive Areas*.
- Removal of the requirement for 60% of total area of the hamlet for grazing, primary production or ecological purposes; as amended in the SEV.

The requirement to locate ancillary buildings within 30m of the main dwelling has also been removed from the SEV.

The Jacks were advised of these changes during a site visit with Council planning consultants on 23rd April 2015.

Development potential

For the purposes of this assessment it has been assumed that, under the current Structure Plan² and the amended SEV that:

- The site could be subdivided into 6 lots (average lot size 1.6ha).
- Two lots could be located in the *Suitable Area* adjacent to Pharazyn Reserve – at 4,000m²+ each (and assuming access - via the Ngarara Precinct). A dwelling could be constructed on each of these lots, up to 8m in height.
- A dwelling could be located in the *Visually Sensitive Area* within one lot above this. The dwelling on this property would be limited to 6m in height and would need to be located to avoid projecting above the top of the dune (under Rule 7A.5.11). This lot would also be accessed via the Ngarara precinct.
- Three other lots would be located in the land to the east of the communication tower – encompassing the remaining areas of land. Three dwellings could be located in these lots on *Suitable Area* land that could have a maximum height of 8m.

In summary, under the SEV, there could be total of 6 lots on the property (average lot size approx. 1.6ha) with three new house sites located to the west of communication tower that are accessed via the Ngarara Precinct.

Under the submission amendments sought:

- The total number of lots consented would remain unchanged – 6 lots.
- All of the new dwellings could be located to the west of the Tower on *Suitable* land, assuming access via the Ngarara Precinct and site layout plan requirements are met (under Rule 7A.1.10.6) .
- Buildings located on more elevated building sites are likely to be limited to 6m in height (to avoid triggering Rule 7A.5.11).

In summary, under the submitter's proposal, while the total number of lots and the average lot size would remain unchanged, up to 6 new dwellings could be located to the west of the communications tower. Councils control would be limited to the matters of discretion for subdivision and checks on the Site Layout Plan at Building Consent and Rule 7A.5.11 would further limit building height.

² Lot area = **9.83ha**

Visually sensitive ridgeline = **17,548m²** (18.5% of lot area)

Visually sensitive areas = **14,236m²** (14.5% of lot area)

Suitable areas = **54,463m²** (55% of lot area)

Suitable areas adjacent to Pharazyn reserve **9,504m²**

Less Suitable areas = **12,044m²** (12% of lot area)

Recommendations

Policy 7.17 sets an overall intention for the eco hamlet zone as an area for rural lifestyle development where:

- natural and heritage features are retained;
- there is open space and the potential for productive landuse; and
- development is well integrated, located below the ridgeline with building scale, materials and additional planting to reduce visual prominence.

Measures to improve amenity and a sense of community are also anticipated through design to improve cycle and pedestrian networks and enhance terrestrial and wetland habitats.

In the context of the Jacks property, the subdivision rule (7A.3.2.6) provides an appropriate framework for the outcomes expected in Policy 7.17. The total number of lots and the size range provided for will help to ensure a rural residential density is achieved. However, the existing Structure Plan areas are likely to create a dispersed pattern of development – with more evenly sized lots and an equal number of residential dwellings located to the west and east of the communications tower. This may compromise areas of open space and the requirement for larger lots to realise productive potential.

The permitted activity standards for development are comprehensive, provide detailed guidance as to the how Policy 7.17 can be implemented and require site plans to be approved at building consent. That being said, permitted activity standards rely primarily on developers ‘good will’ and are only appropriate where there is ‘low to no’ risk for expected outcomes. For this reason, the extent of *Suitable Area* land proposed by the submitter is not recommended.

Given the landscape values identified in the Ngarara Dunes area in the 2012 Landscape Study, the background to the WNEH Structure Plan process and consenting requirements for the adjacent Ngarara Structure Plan area it is recommended that Council retain the ability to review development proposals over the Ngarara Dunes.

The Structure Plan map identifies permitted activity areas below the 15m contour on the west face and the 20m contour on the east face of the dune. It could be argued that the risks to expected outcomes are not markedly reduced in these areas; as the *Suitable* land includes steep slopes, areas in close proximity to the wetland and will provide for new buildings that are likely to be visible from the Pharazyn Reserve and residential properties in Waikanae. However, it is accepted that the site layout plan required for building consent under Rule 7A.1.6, general construction constraints around earthwork costs and the reduced visibility of most *Suitable* areas on the property will provide appropriate checks and balances on ‘broad brush’ factors relevant to the expected outcomes in terms of landscape. Overall, it is recommended that the extent of *Suitable Areas* is retained and that areas with restricted discretionary and non-complying activity status are relevant but can be adjusted to better reflect risk to expected outcomes.

To determine high risk areas where non complying status is relevant (and to determine the boundary between *Visually Sensitive Areas* and *Visually Sensitive Ridgelines*) there are three main factors to consider:

- Height below the top of the dune – to avoid prominent sites where buildings would project above the landform. In general terms this means the *Visually Sensitive Area* boundary can be set 6m below the top of the dune; where single story houses could be accommodated. Further adjustment to the 6m boundary is then made by considering where;

- Steep slopes can be avoided to limit earthworks and gullies may be used to support revegetation; as well as
- Existing infrastructure, in this case the potential for the existing track to be upgraded and extended as the main access route to new lots west of the tower; as a design measure to reduce future earthworks.

Together these factors are combined to recommend changes to the *Visually Sensitive Area and Visually Sensitive Ridgeline* boundary as shown in **Figure 15**. The changes recommended reduce the *Visually Sensitive Ridgeline* area to a total of 9,306m², which is slightly less than that sought by the submitter. However, with the benefit of more detailed GIS information and desktop analysis, the boundary proposed responds to the site contours and provides for a narrow 'restricted discretionary pass' over the dune to allow for low impact access for future development.

In summary, it is recommended:

- *Suitable Areas* are to be retained;
- *Visually Sensitive Areas* are to be extended to include land at least 6m below the top of the dune and gently sloping spurs. Matters of discretion set out in Rule 7A.3.8 will ensure low impact site layout and building prominence is reduced. Rule 7A.5.11 will provide further matters of control to ensure structures do not project above the top of the dune; and
- A narrow 'pass' of *Visually Sensitive Area* land is provided to allow for low impact access to west facing lots. The scale of this area and Rule 7A.5.11 will ensure that this area cannot be used as a building site.

These amendments will provide for a more flexible approach to development including greater opportunity for new lots and house sites to be located west of the communications tower. At the same time, discretion to be applied by Council through the existing Rules for subdivision and development will ensure there is an appropriate degree of certainty that the expected outcomes of Policy 7.17, as they relate to landscape matters, will be met.

Regards,

Lisa Rimmer

Registered NZILA Landscape Architect
Isthmus