

Proposed Waiatarua Local Area Plan

A Long Term Plan for the Character and Amenity of Waiatarua

FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

SUBMISSIONS CLOSE 4.30 PM 21 SEPTEMBER 2009

**31 July 2009
Version 1**



HAVE YOUR SAY ON THE FUTURE OF WAIATARUA

This proposed Waiatarua Local Area Plan presents the outcome of a series of conversations, meetings and workshops with members of the Waiatarua community. The workshops and meetings held between November 2008 and May 2009 provided a chance for Council to listen to residents about the kind of future they wanted for Waiatarua. The focus has been on gathering and understanding people's ideas about the way the community looks and feels now and in the future. Their ideas and visions for the future have been further analysed and developed to form this proposed Plan.

Conversations with members of the community identified the need to set long term goals to work towards. People wanted to avoid the creeping destruction of character by being able to deal with cumulative effects. They also wanted to retain the area's distinctive local identity and its natural forest setting.

Now, we want to hear your views on the proposed Local Area Plan. We need to know what you value and enjoy about this place, what you may not like and want to see change, what you want to stay the same and how you imagine Waiatarua will look in 50 years time.

There are four key components to the Local Area Plan:

1. the boundary – where would you define the boundary?
2. the identification of features important to and valued by the community – does the Plan reflect the features that you value?
3. the descriptions of existing and future character and amenity – do the Plan's descriptions capture your knowledge and experience of Waiatarua?
4. the objectives and actions proposed to achieve the desired future character and amenity – are there other actions that should be included?

A submission form is available from Council [\[insert hyperlink\]](#). Submissions close **21 September 2009**.

Once your comments have been received the Council will consider these and update the proposed Local Area Plan. The Council will then make changes to other Plans: introducing those parts of the Local Area Plan relating to resource management matters into the District Plan through a plan change process and those matters relating to services and facilities into the Long Term Council Community Plan and Annual Plans. As part of the District Plan and the Long Term Council Community Plan the Local Area Plan will guide the actions that help to achieve the desired future for Waiatarua.

If you have any questions please email ranges@waitakere.govt.nz or call Lorraine Maguire on 836 8000 extn 8447.

For the Local Area Plan process and a summary of community views expressed through the consultation and engagement undertaken to date please refer to the report in Appendix A.

1. PURPOSE OF THE LOCAL AREA PLAN

Waiatarua is a special place within the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area (Heritage Area). It is a special place to live, being nestled into the forested Waitakere Ranges. Waiatarua has regionally significant landscapes and a unique character which can be threatened by cumulative one-off decisions by individuals and public agencies resulting in irreversible loss of its valued character and amenity.

Our conversations with the community revealed a willingness to act now to prevent 'accidental' loss of amenity, and in the longer term to strengthen, build on, and capitalise on those unique elements that result from its location, history and character. Those elements make up the foundation for Waiatarua's environmental and landscape quality, economic, social and community wellbeing and stability.

Importantly there is an understanding that the threats are from both public and private actions and that having agreed, well articulated goals and plans can guide this community to secure a future, and contribute to avoiding loss and degradation of opportunity.

The proposed Waiatarua Local Area Plan (LAP) has been prepared to promote the purpose of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008 (the Act) and its objectives. The LAP will inform decision making processes related to the Waiatarua area by establishing long-term objectives in respect of the area's future amenity, character, and environment.

The essence of the LAP is that together we can imagine, plan and influence the future. A LAP is about thinking long term, in generations rather than years.

The LAP seeks to identify what should be protected and enhanced to hand on to future generations. It defines the local area to which the LAP applies and identifies the extent and nature of the heritage features existing in that area.

The LAP outlines how the objectives of the Act will be promoted in Waiatarua and identifies the distinctive natural, cultural, and physical qualities and characteristics of the area that contribute to its long-term amenity. As a guide, the expression 'long-term' is taken to mean beyond a period of 50 years and the LAP seeks to establish the elements and outcomes that should be expected in that future. It provides certainty to the community by providing objectives and policies to inform decision making in relation to the amenity, character, and the environment of Waiatarua. It defines the future that is expected so that decisions can be made about whether activities and proposals assist or detract from the achievement of that desired future. The LAP provides a goal-orientated approach to managing adverse effects, particularly cumulative effects.

The LAP also identifies issues relating to the provision of future services in Waiatarua.

2. LOCAL AREA PLAN BOUNDARY

25(3) of the Act. A LAP must— (a) define the local area to which the LAP applies

The Waitatarua LAP, its description of the future character and amenity, and its objectives apply to the area identified by the map below. The boundary of the LAP is based on the Evaluation of the Boundary for the Waitatarua Local Area Plan Report (Appendix B) and the Act which establishes parameters to consider in identifying the area subject to the LAP.

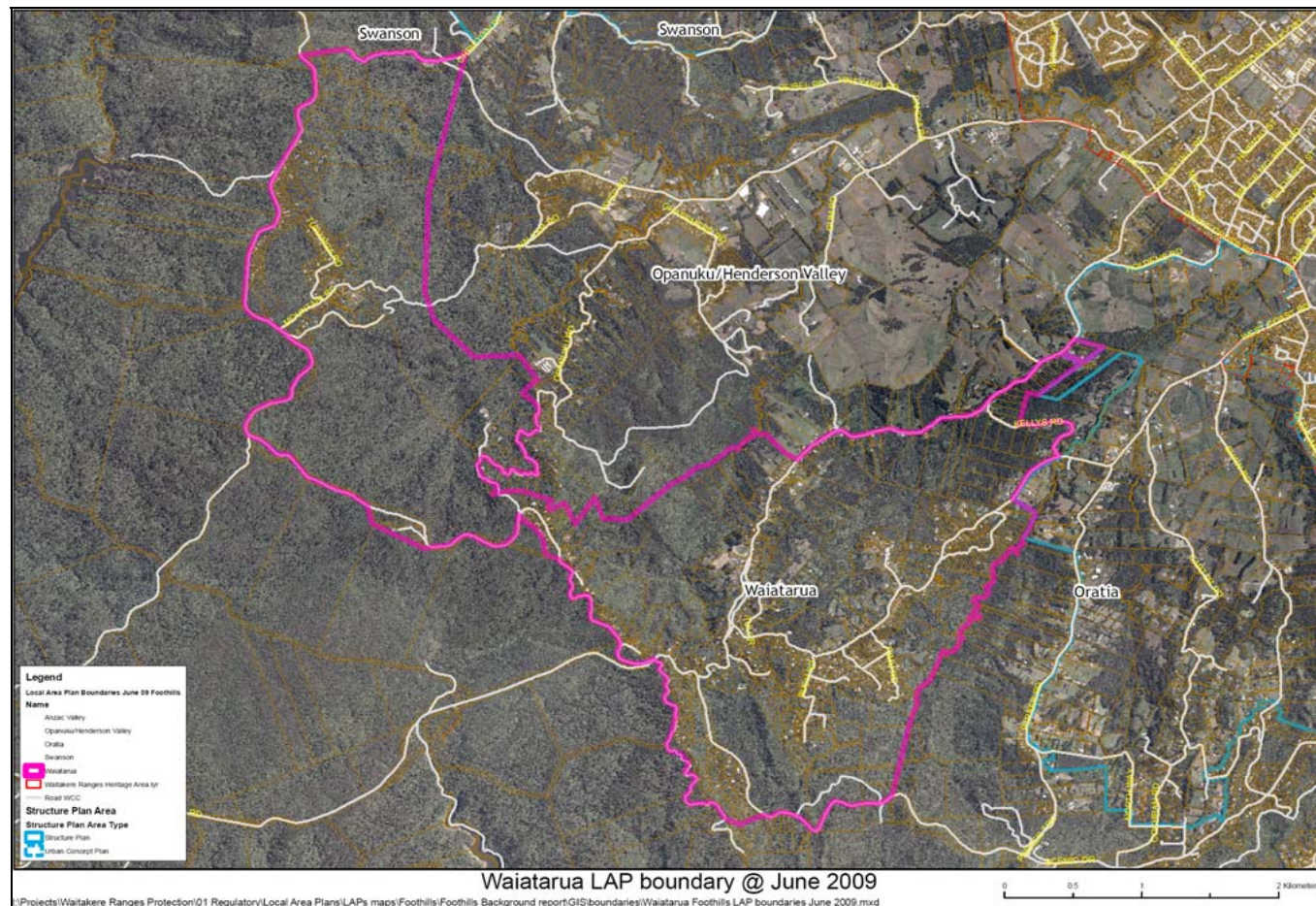


Figure – The boundaries of the Waitatarua Local Area Plan

3. HERITAGE FEATURES

25(3) of the Act. A LAP must— (b) identify the extent and nature of the heritage features existing in the local area

The Background Reports on the Foothills and Waiatarua (Appendix C and D respectively) identify the extent and nature of the heritage features that exist in Waiatarua. The Background Reports form part of the LAP. These features are valued because of the contribution they make to the regional, national and local significance of the Waiatarua area and the Heritage Area as a whole.

Summary of the valued Heritage Features of Waiatarua

- *The terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of prominent indigenous character.* This comprises large continuous areas of regenerating rainforest with intact ecological areas. The forested areas are landscapes of regional and national significance, have natural scenic beauty and include areas of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. The forest and streams have intrinsic value and provide a diversity of habitats for indigenous flora and fauna, have national biodiversity significance and are recognised as outstanding.
- *The natural landforms and landscapes that contrast and connect with each other, and which collectively give the area its distinctive character.* This comprises the ridgelines, steep slopes of the upper foothills, valleys and ravines. The landscapes include the last vestiges of rural farming activities, sparsely settled areas and the dominant forested areas. These contribute to the dramatic landform of the Ranges and foothills, which is the visual backdrop to metropolitan Auckland, forming its western skyline.
- *The naturally functioning Oratia and Opanuku Streams and their tributaries which originate in the Waitakere Ranges.* The streams have not been dammed for water supply purposes and contribute positively to downstream ecology, urban character, stormwater management, and flood protection.
- *The quietness and darkness of the Waitakere Ranges.* Low levels of street lighting, low density settlement and houses screened by vegetation contribute to a relatively dark night sky and a sense of sparse settlement.
- *Wilderness experiences, wildness, recreation, and relaxation* are provided by a network of tracks and viewing areas associated with the Regional Park and Scenic Drive.
- *The transition and buffer provided by the foothills from metropolitan Auckland and the forested ranges and coast.* Waiatarua sits within the forested Ranges and is part of the transition from metropolitan Auckland, through rural Oratia and Opanuku/Henderson Valley to the forested Ranges.
- *The subservience of the built environment to the area's natural and rural landscape.* This is reflected in the distinctive amenity of the low-density residential areas that are located in regenerating (and increasingly dominant) forest settings adjoining the forested core of the Waitakere Ranges. Buildings are nestled into the forested landscape. The proportion of built area to forest is very small with little potential for further development or subdivision.
- *The historical, traditional, and cultural relationships of people, communities, and tangata whenua with the area and their exercise of kaitiakitanga and stewardship.* These include Maori and European historical relationships and those of the existing community with the area.
- *Evidence of past human activities, including those in relation to timber extraction, gum digging, flax milling, mineral extraction, intensive farming and orcharding.* The upper foothills are rich in archaeological sites, historic structures and historical botanic sites.

- *The distinctive community.* Waiatarua is a distinctive place with its low density dispersed settlement spread out as a ribbon along the ridgelines of the Waitakere Ranges.
- *The Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and its importance as an accessible public place with significant natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources.*
- *The public water supply catchment, which parts of Waiatarua drains to.*

4. FUTURE CHARACTER AND AMENITY OF WAIATARUA

25(3) of the Act. A LAP must— (d) identify the distinctive natural, cultural, or physical qualities or characteristics of the local area that contribute to the local area’s long term— (i) pleasantness or aesthetic coherence; or (ii) cultural or recreational attributes

A LAP is required to define the future character and amenity of the Waiatarua area. This is to establish a long-term goal of how the community should look and feel in 50 or 100 years time. The LAP provides the basis for evaluating whether actions, proposals or activities assist or detract from the achievement of that desired future, and for assessing any adverse effects.

Why does ‘amenity’ matter?

‘Amenity’ has an everyday meaning understood by us all. In the Resource Management Act, the term ‘amenity values’ is used to describe those parts of the environment that constitute the natural and physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to peoples’ appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes. The term embraces both natural elements such as forests, streams and landforms, and human-made elements, such as hedgerows, land uses, buildings and roads. It also includes the arrangement or disposition of those things, their design, prominence and effect on the landscape.

In making decisions about the use of land and resources under the Resource Management Act, consideration must be given to the adverse effects that an activity might have on the environment, including amenity.

Existing Character and Amenity Statement

The existing character and amenity of Waiatarua is defined by the following distinctive qualities:

1. Heart of the Waitakere Ranges.

Waiatarua is located in the heart of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area. The western and southern edge of Waiatarua is bounded by large continuous areas of primary and regenerating indigenous rainforest, the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and the public water supply catchments. By contrast, the eastern edge is bounded by the orchards and farms of Oratia and Opanuku/Henderson Valley.

The area is a landscape of national and regional significance. It has outstanding scenic beauty, and forms the dramatic visual backdrop to metropolitan Auckland. It has outstanding views from its elevated location to metropolitan Auckland, the Waitemata Harbour and the Waitakere Ranges.

The landform includes steep, deeply dissected valleys and ravines that are potentially unstable.

The character and amenity is dominated by terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of prominent indigenous character. The ecosystems are of national significance and comprise a rich diversity of indigenous flora and fauna. It has a high rainfall, which increases in frequency with altitude. Clouds and mist blanket the area during inclement days.

2. Sparse residential settlement.

Waiatarua’s form of residential living is a unique and scarce feature in the region. Residents desire to live in close proximity to nature, for tranquillity, quiet, privacy and the views. Residents enjoy both the proximity to, and the relative remoteness from metropolitan Auckland.

Waiatarua is a distinctive low density residential community with a form based on a ribbon-like pattern of lots and buildings running along the forested ridgelines. This leaves continuous and expansive areas of rainforest on the slopes, valleys and ravines.

Buildings are subservient to the natural landscape, being nestled into the regenerating and increasingly dominant forest setting and generally obscured from the road by vegetation. Sites are partially self-servicing with no reticulated wastewater infrastructure. The area has a sparse and spread out population, with parts of the community separated a considerable distance from one another by the forest, Regional Park and landform.

Amenity at the individual property level is characterised by a strong sense of privacy and remoteness from neighbours, with the forest restricting views from public places into properties – ‘looking out rather than in’. The public amenity of the area is based on the expansive views from Scenic Drive, panoramic views into the area from metropolitan Auckland and contained views along the roads running along the ridgelines.

Roads are located on ridgelines and are generally winding, without kerb and footpaths. There are low levels of street lighting and a relatively dark night sky. These attributes contribute to a sense of sparse settlement.

3. Community focal point.

Waiatarua has a good range of community facilities and places to meet, partly as a consequence of its location along the route to the west coast beaches. It has a strong sense of community.

There is an absence of urban-scale activities. Activities include the neighbourhood-scale community facilities of the fire station, hall and library, meeting places such as a café and visitor and accommodation facilities.

Future Character and Amenity Statement

The community has identified a desired future where Waiatarua should generally remain the same as it is now, with very little change other than the continued growth of the forest. These are goals which will be used to evaluate and guide development and for public and private landowners to fulfil.

1. Maintaining the natural character.

The character and amenity of Waiatarua will continue to be derived from retaining its dominant forested character, scenic beauty, quiet, darkness and sense of enclosure.

Infill subdivision and development will be avoided to maintain a low density residential community. Buildings will continue to be subservient to the natural landscape and nestled within the landscape in a manner consistent and compatible with existing patterns of development.

2. Restoring the environment.

The forests will increase in prominence and quality. The number and extent of weeds and pests will be reduced through active management.

Heritage buildings and sites will be protected, reused, restored, enhanced and celebrated.

3. Working from home.

Waiatarua will continue to have a high proportion of residents working from home, drawn to the lifestyle and high speed telecommunications. Business activities will be based around existing activities, with other small-scale home-based activities focused on the area’s outstanding beauty and recreation value.

4. Valuing the focal point.

The Waiatarua community will continue to value, maintain and enhance existing community facilities.

5. THE WAIATARUA OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND ACTIONS

Section 25(3) of the Act. A LAP must — (c) state how it is intended that the objectives in section 8 will be promoted in relation to the local area.

Section 25(3) of the Act. A LAP must— (e) state policies and objectives in relation to the amenity, character, and environment of the local area.

Section 25(4) of the Act. A LAP may identify issues relating to the provision of future services in the local area to which the LAP applies.

The Act is promoted through the identification of: the heritage features; the definition of existing and future character and amenity; and the introduction of the Waiatarua objectives, policies and actions. These objectives, policies and actions establish how elements of the existing character and amenity will be protected, restored and enhanced and how the desired future is to be achieved.

It is not intended that the Council will be the only party implementing the following list of objectives, policies and actions. They need to be promoted in a manner that encourages everyone to own them. The community are encouraged to consider further actions that may be appropriate to achieve the desired future character and amenity for Waiatarua.

O. Waiatarua Local Area Plan Objectives	P. Policies	A. Actions Promoting the Objectives
<p><i>Heritage Features, Character, Amenity and Environment</i></p> <p>O1. Recognise the contribution that the heritage features of Waiatarua make to the national significance of the Waitakere Ranges and foothills, and to the future amenity, character and environment of Waiatarua; and to the wellbeing of the Waiatarua community; and to that end protect, restore and enhance:</p>	<p>P1. Include in relevant statutory documents significant findings from the Waiatarua Local Area Plan.</p> <p>P2. Implement all the objectives, policies and actions of this Plan to give effect to the future character and amenity statement.</p>	<p>A1. Introduce a plan change to include those matters in the LAP relating to a resource management purpose in the District Plan.</p> <p>A2. Identify and include matters relating to the maintenance and provision of services in Annual Plans and the Long Term Council Community Plan.</p> <p>A3. Evaluate the LAP process as a contribution to planning within the new planning framework for Auckland.</p>
<p>O1.1 its terrestrial and aquatic eco-systems of a prominent indigenous character</p>	<p>P3. Identify and make available to the public, information about the extent, character and quality of indigenous vegetation and habitats of Waiatarua, and its conservation and enhancement needs.</p> <p>P4. Avoid any further loss of significant areas of indigenous vegetation and indigenous habitat.</p>	<p>A4. Complete an inventory and assessment of existing terrestrial and aquatic indigenous habitats of Waiatarua.</p> <p>A5. Promote the formal protection of significant natural areas on private land through Heritage Area Covenants or other mechanisms.</p> <p>A6. Restore significant natural areas, to provide habitat, corridors and linkages.</p> <p>A7. Develop and co-ordinate programmes of Council action, community action, and landowner action to achieve weed and pest management and destruction.</p> <p>A8. Identify and protect species that are endemic to the Heritage Area or locally rare or endangered.</p> <p>A9. Monitor the extent and quality of ecosystems.</p> <p>A10. Advocate for a dedicated Heritage Area chapter in the Auckland Regional Pest Management Plan to integrate landowner, volunteer and council initiatives.</p>
<p>O1.2 the natural and dramatic landforms and landscapes.</p>		
<p>O1.3 the naturally functioning streams and their margins.</p>		<p>A11. Establish water quality targets for the Oratia and Opanuku Streams and their tributaries.</p> <p>A12. Monitor and report on water quality and habitat condition.</p> <p>A13. Establish a Ranges Neighbourhood Initiative (or similar) in Waiatarua to promote weed and pest control.</p>
<p>O1.4 opportunities for wilderness and recreation experiences close to metropolitan Auckland.</p>	<p>P5. Map development proposals for heritage trails, and prepare inventory of interpretation.</p> <p>P6. Develop access trail networks in association with</p>	<p>A14. Design, locate and install visitor amenity, signage and interpretation systems.</p> <p>A15. In order to improve the quality of the wilderness experience</p>

	landowners. P7. Identify and maintain public and roadside lookouts and view shafts.	and the scenic recreation opportunity, identify lookouts from Scenic Drive that should be maintained.
O1.5 a built environment that is subservient to the natural character. O1.6 its quietness and darkness. O1.7 its role as a buffer to and transition from metropolitan Auckland to the forested ranges and coast	P8. Take a precautionary approach to subdivision and development that could irreversibly damage the area's heritage features or that detracts from, or undermines the achievement of the desired future character and amenity for Waiatarua.	
O1.8 the historical, traditional, cultural relationships of people, communities and Tangata Whenua with the area. O1.9 the evidence of past human activities.	P9. Promote Waiatarua's historic, traditional, and cultural relationships of people, communities and Tangata Whenua.	A16. Establish heritage trails based on Waiatarua's cultural heritage. A17. Establish <i>Pou</i> to recognise Tangata Whenua associations with Waiatarua. A18. Identify and protect cultural heritage. A19. Include statement from Tangata Whenua in the Character and Amenity statement and associated District Plan Change.
O1.10 the relationship with the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park.		
O1.11 the features of the area that relate to its water supply catchment.		
O2. <i>Wellbeing</i> To provide for the well-being of the Waiatarua community, including its social and economic well-being.	P10. Maintain a neighbourhood-scale focal point based on community facilities. P11. Enable and support opportunities for working from home based on small scale business enterprises. P12. Enable recreational activities that are compatible with, and sympathetic to, the natural environment.	A20. Introduce signage to identify the transition to the Waiatarua community. A21. Advocate for high speed telecommunications upgrades in Waiatarua.
O3. <i>Subdivision, Development and Character</i> O3.1 To recognise that, in protecting the area's character, amenity and heritage features, Waiatarua has little	P13. Use the definition of future character and amenity as goals to avoid cumulative adverse effects on natural character.	A22. Review the code of practice(s) to provide for bush living standards to maintain the existing character, and ensure these standards or criteria are reflected in the District Plan.

<p>capacity to absorb further subdivision.</p> <p>O3.2 To ensure that any subdivision or development in Waiatarua, of itself or in respect of its cumulative effect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) is of an appropriate character, scale and intensity to retain the natural character; and (ii) maintains a low density community; and (iii) does not adversely affect the area's heritage features; and (iv) does not contribute to urban sprawl; and (v) achieves the future character and amenity statement. 	<p>P14. Retain existing District Plan subdivision controls to avoid further infill.</p> <p>P15. Avoid development which establishes reticulated wastewater infrastructure.</p> <p>P16. Evaluate the extent to which the policy on minor household units is consistent with the objectives of the Local Area Plan.</p> <p>P17. Avoid urban scale transport infrastructure in Waiatarua.</p>	<p>A23. Extend code of practice(s) to reinforce the Local Area Plan policy.</p> <p>A24. Ensure that dwellings and ancillary buildings are setback sufficiently from the road and include landscaping where necessary to fully or partially obscure built development from the road.</p>
<p>O4. Implementation</p> <p>To be active in the implementation and communication of the Local Area Plan.</p>	<p>P18. Improve the ability to manage landowner relationships with Council.</p> <p>P19. Support the creation of a community-based advocacy group for the implementation of the Local Area Plan.</p>	

We want to hear your views on the proposed Local Area Plan. We need to know what you value and enjoy about this place, what you may not like and want to see change, what you want to stay the same and how you imagine Waiatarua will look in 50 years time.

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