

Evaluation of the Boundary for the Waiatarua Local Area Plan



31 July 2009
Version 1



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1.0 Statutory Context – Local Area Plans

Waiatarua is a special place within the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area. It is a unique living opportunity 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.

From our conversations with the community there is 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 resulting from its location, history and character, and to use those elements as the foundation for environmental and landscape quality, economic, social and community wellbeing and stability.

A Local Area Plan (LAP) needs to define the local area to which it will apply. Within this area the LAP identifies heritage features and seeks to promote the protection, restoration and enhancement of those features that are valued by the community.

The formulation of the LAP's goals and actions (objectives and policies), particularly those relating to the use of public and private land, requires a clear and distinct geographic boundary to be identified. This is particularly important in relation to measures which may result in consenting guidance, through the District Plan or as part of the provision of services and facilities as part of the Long Term Council Community Plan. This provides landowners, applicants and those making decisions with certainty as to where the provisions of the LAP apply.

The types of features are important in considering the boundary of the LAP are outlined in the Waitakere ranges Heritage Area Act (the Act). These features include;

- Distinctive communities
- Streams and water catchments
- Landforms and landscapes
- Ecological areas

Local areas are identified by their own uniquely distinct character and amenity. The character and amenity of an area is strongly shaped by its landscape. In Oratia this landscape consists of a valley with vineyards, orchards and varied rural and productive landscapes, also with areas of natural landscapes. As the LAP will inform and shape the future character and amenity of Oratia, landscape has been a key factor in the determination of the boundary.

Local areas are defined by their own uniquely distinct character and amenity. The character and amenity of an area is strongly shaped by its landscape. In Waiatarua this landscape consists of ribbon-like development nestled into dense native forest . As the LAP will inform and shape the future character and amenity of Waiatarua, landscape has been a key factor in the determination of the boundary location.

Council has engaged with the community as to where the boundary of the areas extends to. Consultation on the Oratia boundary is discussed in section 4.0.

2.0 Location of LAP Boundary (Figure 1)

The identification of the boundary does not seek to redefine the manner in which the community, or other organisation such as NZ Post, view Waiatarua. While the boundary identifies Waiatarua in relation to the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area (Heritage Area)

this does not mean Waiatarua needs to be considered in isolation. Waiatarua needs to be seen in a wider context including the Waitakere Ranges, the Foothills and the urban areas of metropolitan Auckland. It is important to consider the areas surrounding Waiatarua, Oratia and Opanuku (Henderson Valley). Whilst in some areas the transition from one local area to another might be distinctive and marked by noticeable changes in topography, vegetation and land uses, in other areas the transition may be less noticeable and difficult to define, as elements characteristic with each local area blend and merge with the other. Understanding the distinctive communities of Opanuku and Oratia has aided in defining the boundary.

The boundary has been established around the local area, to focus the LAP and its vision for the future and identified implementation actions, and to give a clear indication to landowners and others as to the area that will be subject by any measures adopted. The boundary will delineate the area in which the LAP relates.

Areas need be distinctly identified within one LAP or another. As the LAP (or part of it) may be included in the District Plan, boundaries are drawn along existing or proposed cadastral boundaries. Although this enables individual parcels of land to be either wholly in or wholly out of any particular LAP, it does mean that in some cases lines are not drawn in the most physically accurate location.

When determining the extent of the boundaries, a range of matters need to be considered, in addition to the consultation, in order to establish a boundary that is robust and appropriate. The boundary is based on the maps provided by the community during consultation (see section 4.0) and a combination of features. These include;

- Extent of the local issues and heritage features that would benefit from the LAP
- Existing natural patterns e.g. topography, ecology, landscape, vegetation, streams, water catchments
- Existing physical patterns e.g. access (roads), residential development
- Distinctive communities
- Administrative boundaries e.g. residents and ratepayers, school zones, District Plan zones, metropolitan urban limits

Taking in account the consideration of the above matters the boundary is proposed in the map which follows:

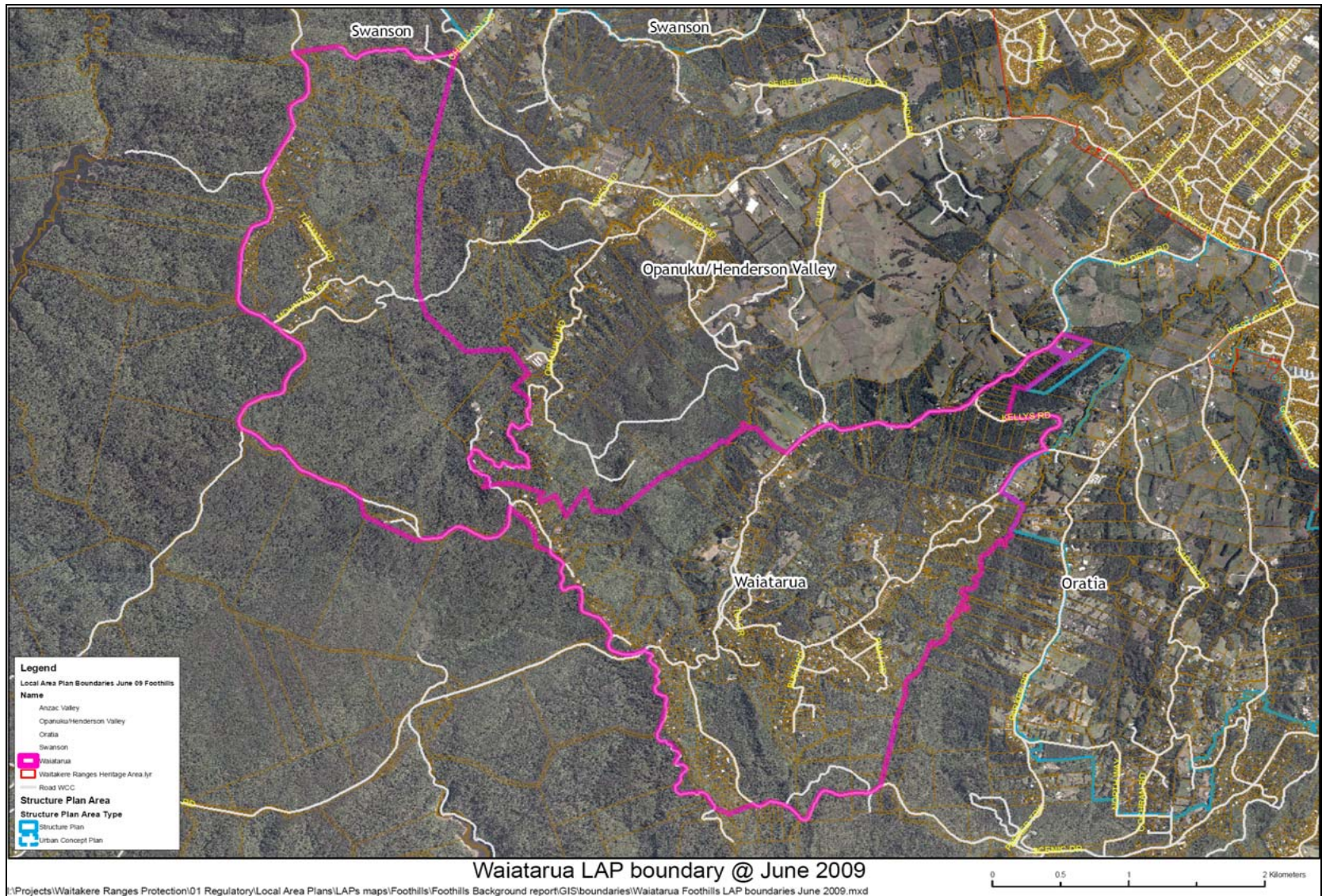


Figure 1: Waiatarua LAP Boundary

The south and south-western boundary follows Scenic Drive and includes Quinn's Road. This boundary follows the regional parkland, the open space zoning and is broadly consistent with the Opanuku Headwaters catchment.

The eastern boundary of Waiatarua is bounded by Forest Hill Road, Kelly's Road and the Oratia Stream. The boundary corresponds with the UF6 landscape unit.

The northern boundary of Waiatarua bounded by Christian Road in the west, Forest Hill Road in the east, and runs around the back of Opanuku Road excluding it from the Waiatarua local area. This boundary includes the upper Waitakere ranges and Bush Living zoned properties and follows parts of the regional parkland boundary.

The western boundary of Waiatarua is defined by Scenic Drive and the Regional Parkland. It includes the bush living zones properties of Turanga Road and Tawari Road.

The Waiatarua boundary is largely defined by the communities of Bush Living and Waitakere Ranges zoned properties which are located along the eastern ridgeline of the Waitakere Ranges.

Section 4.0 and 5.0 of this report provide a more detailed discussion of the factors that lead to the location of this boundary.

3.0 Distinctive Communities

Defining distinctive communities has been a theme throughout the community meetings for Waiatarua and Oratia. Distinctive communities relate to an individual's or community's sense of belonging to an area or locality, and can be readily identified and typically have;

- A dependence on shared facilities in an area, including schools, recreational, and cultural facilities; and
- A physical and topographical coherence; and
- Local history; and
- Common amenity and landscape.

The Waiatarua community has a unique character, amenity and identity based on the historical circumstances of the locality and past and present development patterns. While Oratia is often referred to as a gateway to the Ranges, Waiatarua lies within the heart of the Waitakere Ranges and is characterised by ribbon-like development nestled into native forest. As a community located at the top eastern slopes of the Waitakere Ranges, Waiatarua provides a backdrop to, and views to, the wider Auckland area. Existing built development is subservient to a natural environment. The area is dominated by nationally and regionally significant landscapes made up of ridgelines, headwaters of streams and dense native forests. Waiatarua abuts the Regional Park.

4.0 Consultation

Consultation with the Waiatarua community was undertaken concurrently with the Oratia community. Consultation in relation to the LAP boundary consisted of;

- Community Meeting and Open Day on the 19th November 2008. Maps of Oratia were available and attendees were asked draw what they believed the boundaries of Oratia to be.
- Waiatarua Community Meeting (held after Waiatarua Residents and Ratepayers AGM) on the 22nd February 2009. Maps of Oratia and Waiatarua were available

and attendees were asked draw what they believed the boundaries of Waiatarua to be.

- Oratia Community Meeting (held after Oratia Residents and Ratepayers AGM) on the 14th April 2009. A letter was sent out to all residents that attended this meeting with boundary maps to comment on.
- Waiatarua Residents and Ratepayers Meeting on the 26th May 2009. Attendees were provided with boundary maps to comment on.

72 residents provided Council with their version of the boundary.

- 22 boundary maps submitted showing a Waiatarua boundary.
- 50 boundary maps were submitted showing an Oratia boundary
- 3 of these maps showed both Oratia and Waiatarua boundaries.

The community consultation was an important part of the process. It highlighted both consensus and divergence in views on the boundary. The community drawn boundaries were used a draft boundary which was then modified in places based on the elements discussed in section 5.0.

The Waiatarua boundaries showed a degree of consistency in some areas, such as Kelly's Road in the north-east, Scenic Drive in the south-west, and Turanga Road in the north-west (Figure 2). There is some divergence of views as to where the eastern and northern boundaries of Waiatarua are. The most popular eastern boundary location appears to be the stream between West Coast Road and Parker Road, which also corresponds with where a number of respondents drew the western boundary of Oratia.

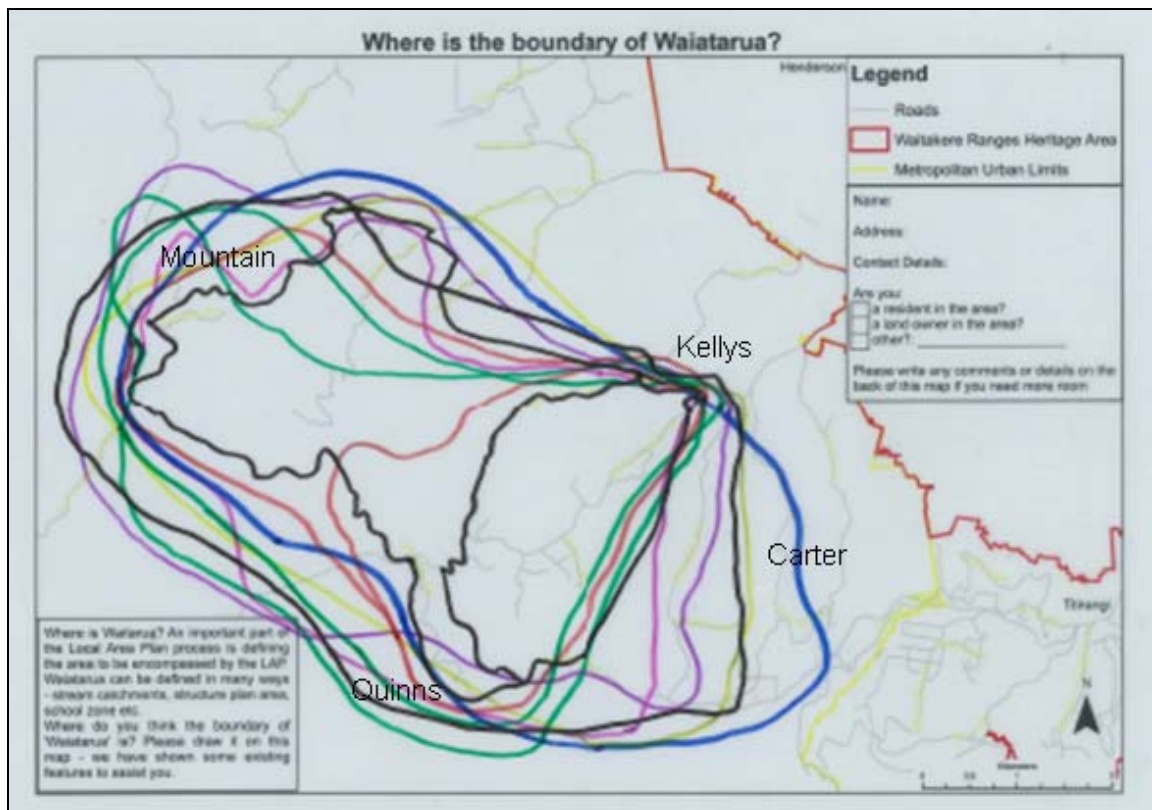


Figure 2: Waiatarua Community Boundaries

5.0 Existing Characteristics

In considering the boundary for Waiatarua a number of existing framing elements that help to define Waiatarua and the neighbouring communities have been considered. Because of the overlapping features that define a community the boundary cannot be based rigidly on the extent of any one feature, but rather a combination of features as appropriate to the circumstances. The existing boundaries which helped to define the boundary of Waiatarua are discussed in this section.

5.1 Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area (Figure 3)

A combination of ecological, landscape and cultural features were the main drivers during the process of defining the Heritage Area boundary. Other features that also helped to define the boundary included;

- District Plan zones.
- Auckland Regional Policy Statement, including the Metropolitan Urban Limit and the urban intensification policy.
- Auckland Regional Growth Strategy, North and West Sector Agreement and District Plan policies
- Water catchment boundaries
- Geological boundaries and landform/contour information

The Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area provides a boundary for which the LAP must fall within. However, as Waiatarua is located south of the Heritage Area boundary, rather than sitting adjacent to it, the Heritage Area boundary was not a determining factor.

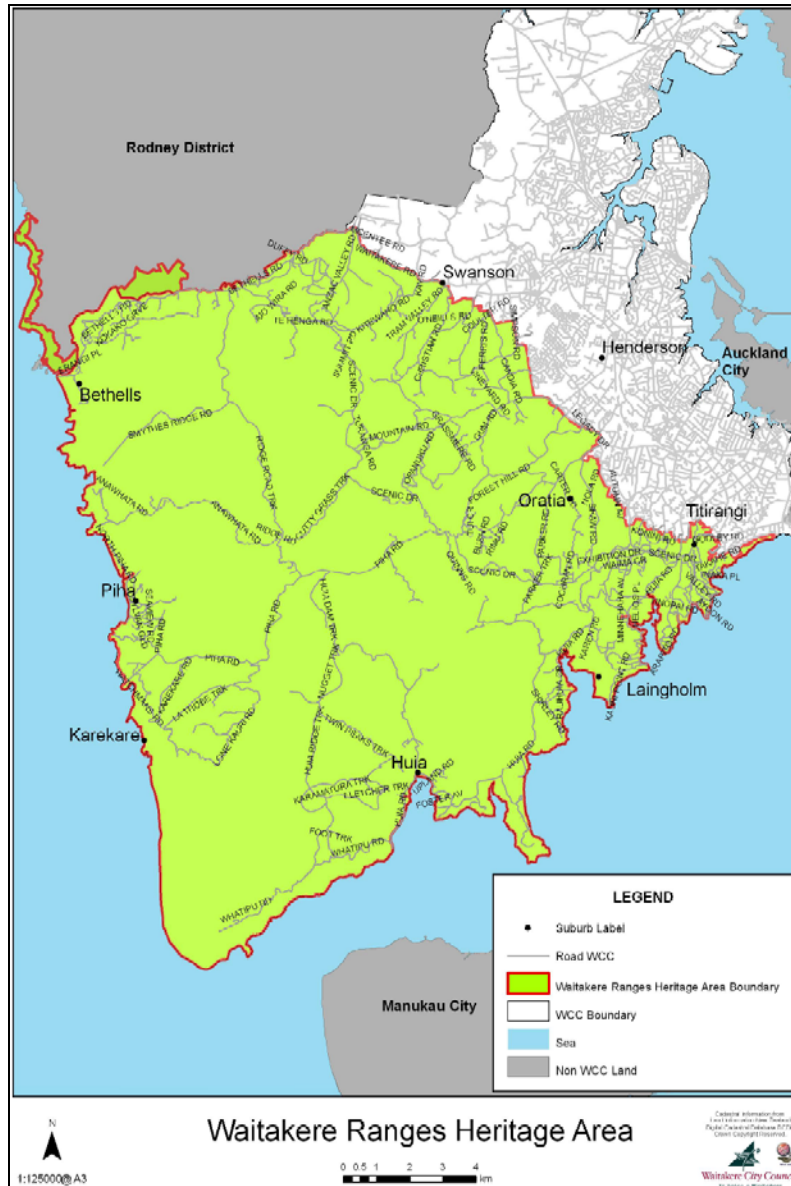


Figure 3: Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area

5.2 Residents and Ratepayers Boundaries

The resident and ratepayers association boundaries formed an important consideration in the drafting of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area boundary. The resident and ratepayers boundaries differ from the other boundaries described in this report in that they have been formed by members of the resident and ratepayers association rather than by the existing physical and natural patterns that form the other boundaries. The resident and ratepayers boundaries represent communities of interest and illustrate an area in which the community identifies with.

Waitakere Ranges Residents and Ratepayers Boundary (Figure 4)

The constitution of the Waitakere Ranges Residents and Ratepayers Association boundary signed in 1990 states that the district shall be the areas generally bounded by;

- Shaw Road to the South;
- Lone Kauri Farm to the West;

- Mountain Road to the North:
- Kelly's Bridge to the East.

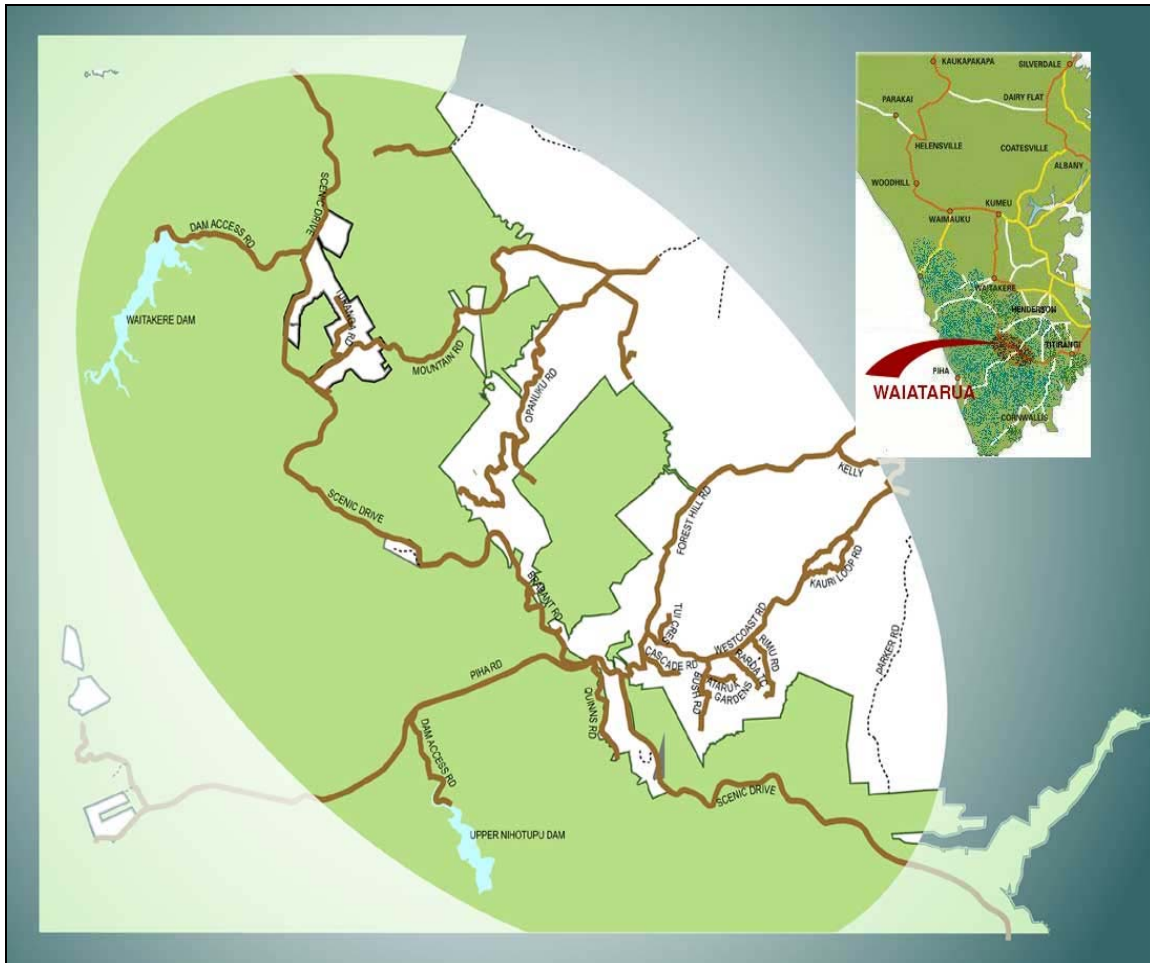


Figure 4: Waiatarua Residents and Ratepayers boundary

Oratia Residents and Ratepayers Boundary (Figure 5)

The constitution of the Oratia District Ratepayers and Residents Association signed in August 1952 states that *“the district shall be that Area generally bounded by Glen Eden in the East, Sunnyvale Ratepayers Association Boundary in the North, Waiperia Riding Boundary in the North-west and Auckland City Water-shed Boundary in the South”*.

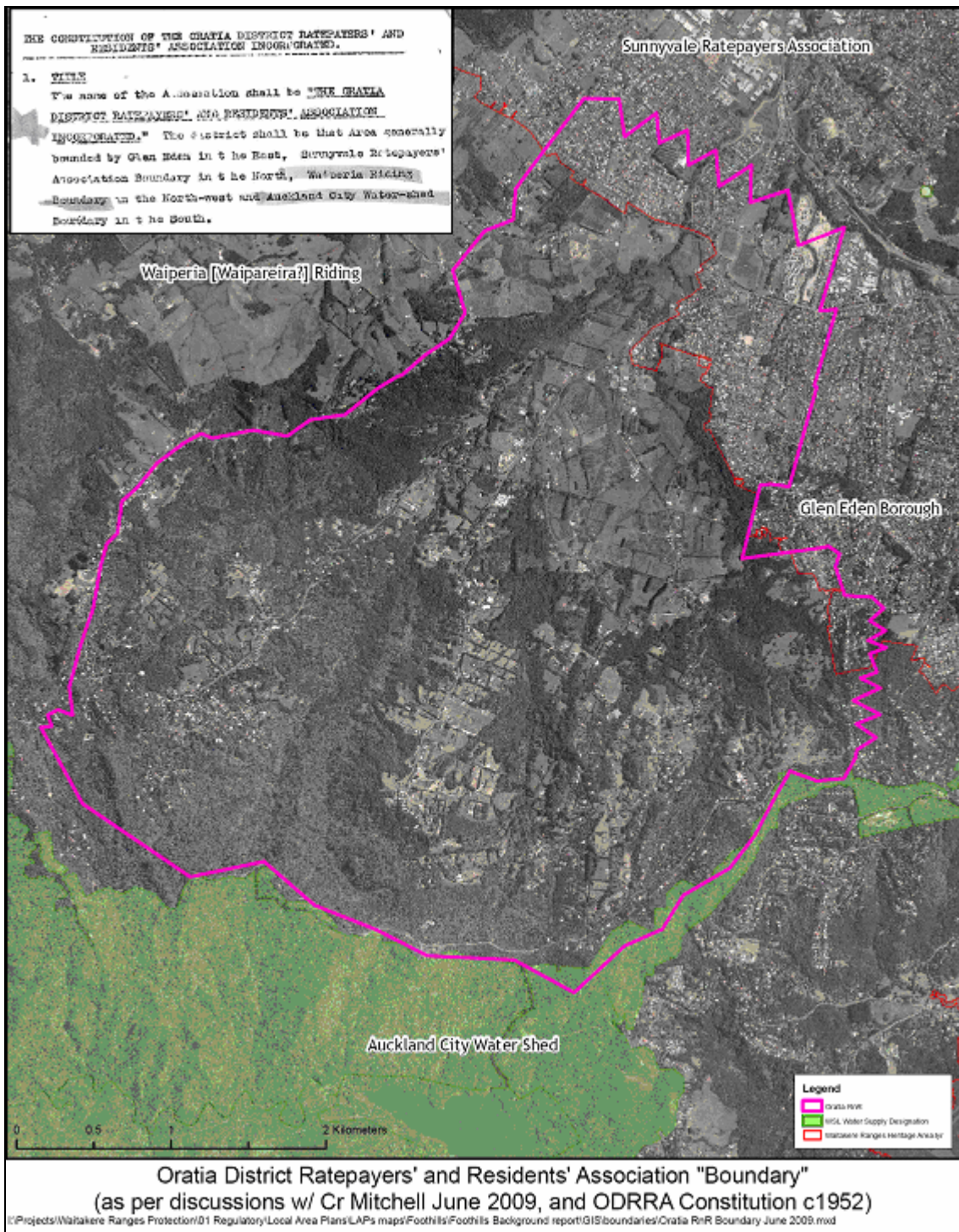


Figure 5: Oratia Residents and Ratepayers Boundary

Henderson Residents and Ratepayers Boundary (Figure 6)

"The Henderson Valley area more or less includes the district west of the intersection of Pine Avenue and Henderson Valley Road, north of Forest Hill Road, east of Scenic Drive and south of Coulter Road."

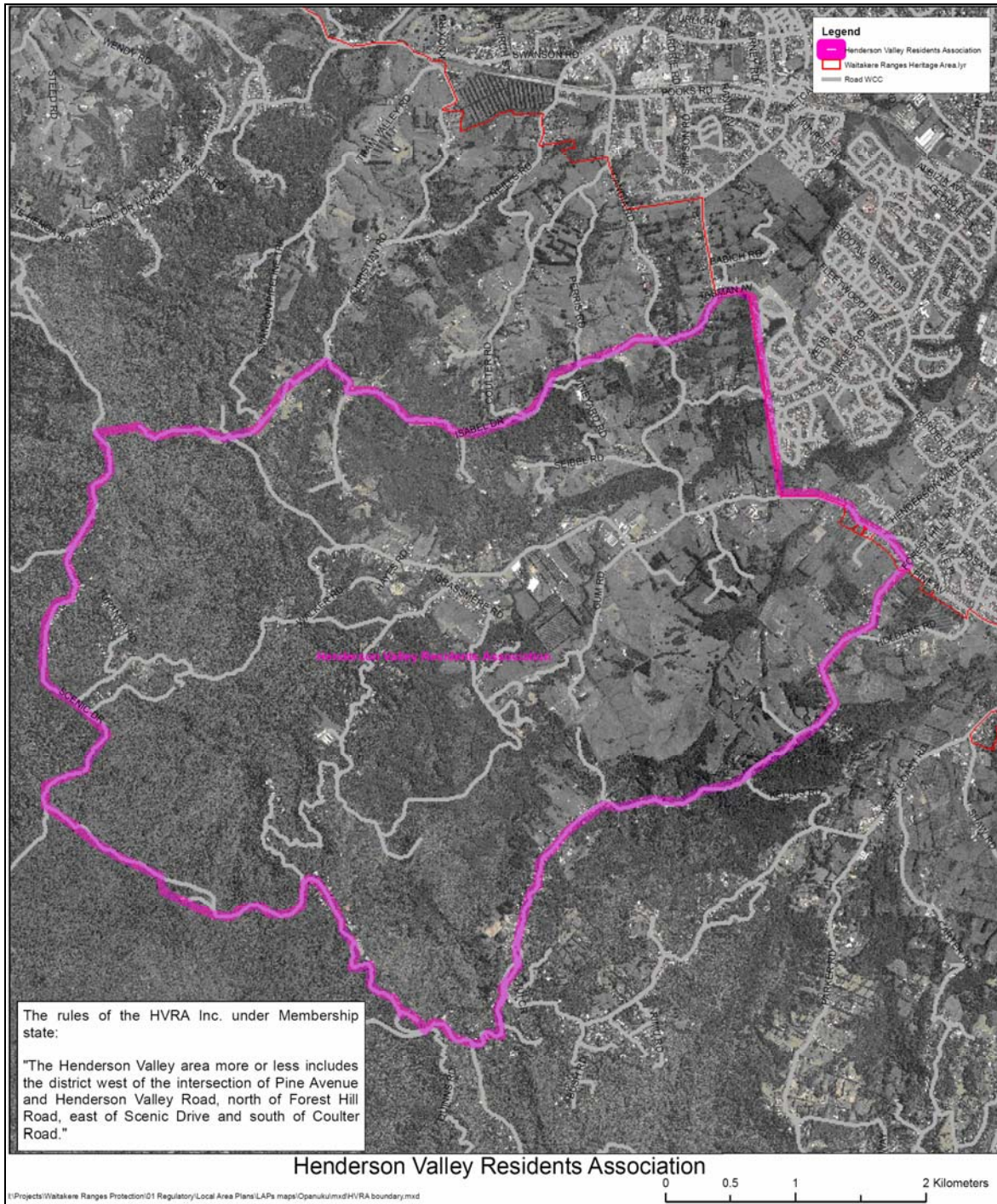


Figure 6: Henderson Valley Residents and Ratepayers Boundary

5.3 School Boundaries

There are two schools that serve the Waitakere area, Henderson Valley School and Oratia District School. Both schools are 'zoned' and first preference for enrolment is given to those who live within the school zone. Both schools enrol student from new entrant (year one) to year six. There are no high schools located within the Heritage Area and student above year six, travel out of the area to attend intermediate and high schools.

Schools and their catchments help to define "distinctive communities". In rural areas, schools often act as a focal point for the community, where children and families are

drawn to on a regular basis. A focal points children and families will socialise with others from the same zone. These school zones also define local transport patterns as the schools act as a transport node within the community. Combined these transport and social patterns define the “distinctive communities” in which its residents are located and feel connected to.

Waiatarua intersects both the Henderson Valley and Oratia School zones. Figure 7 and 8 (below) show that children from Waiatarua West predominately attend Henderson Valley School and children from Waiatarua East predominately Oratia School.

Oratia District School (Primary) (Figure 7)

Oratia Primary School is located in the heart of Oratia situated on the corner of Shaw and West Coat Roads and has a role of approximately 528 pupils. The school serves a wide catchment which includes Piha and Karekare to the west, Parrs Cross and Forest Hill Roads to the north, Glengarry Road to the east and Scenic Drive between Opanuku and Tawini Roads.

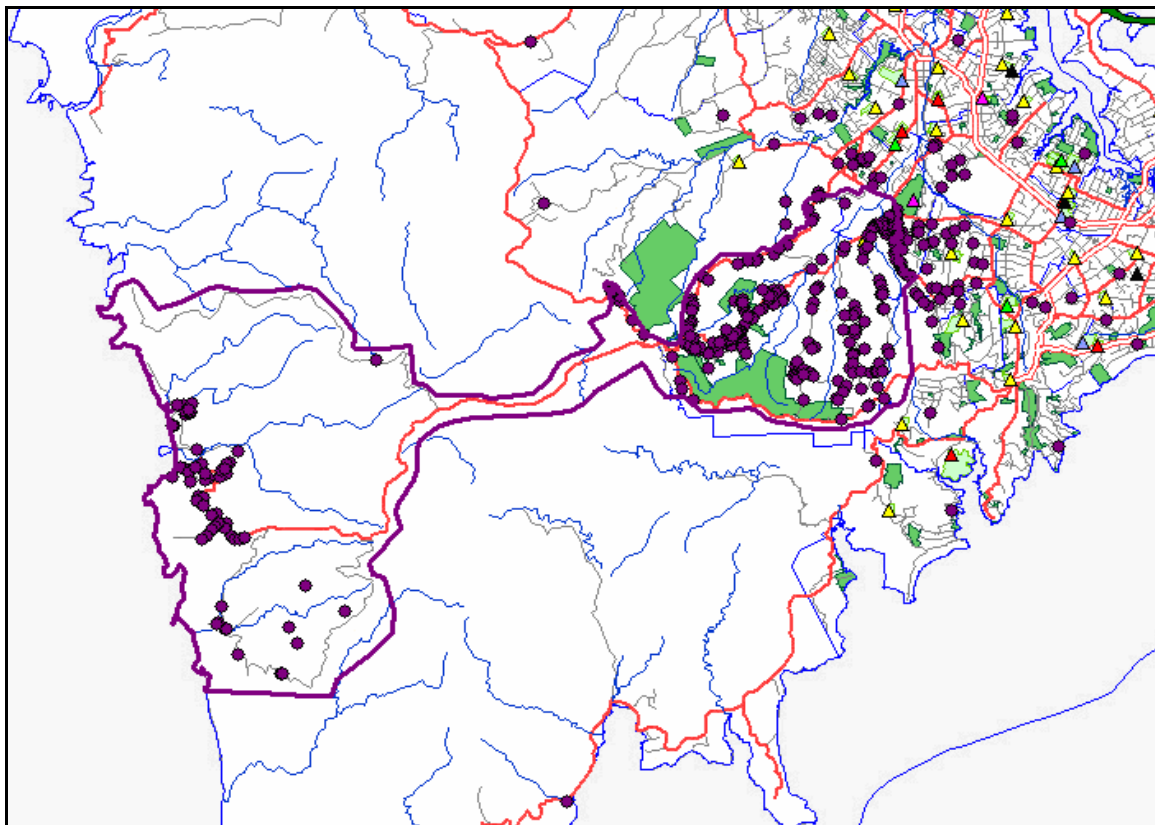


Figure 7: Oratia School Zone (purple boundary is the school zone, purple dots highlights the areas where the school children reside)

Henderson Valley School (Primary) (Figure 8)

The Henderson Valley Primary School is located on Henderson Valley Road and has a role of approximately 375 students. The zone is bordered by Forest Hill Road to the south, Opanuku Stream to the east, Coulter Road to the north and Henderson Valley Road to the west.

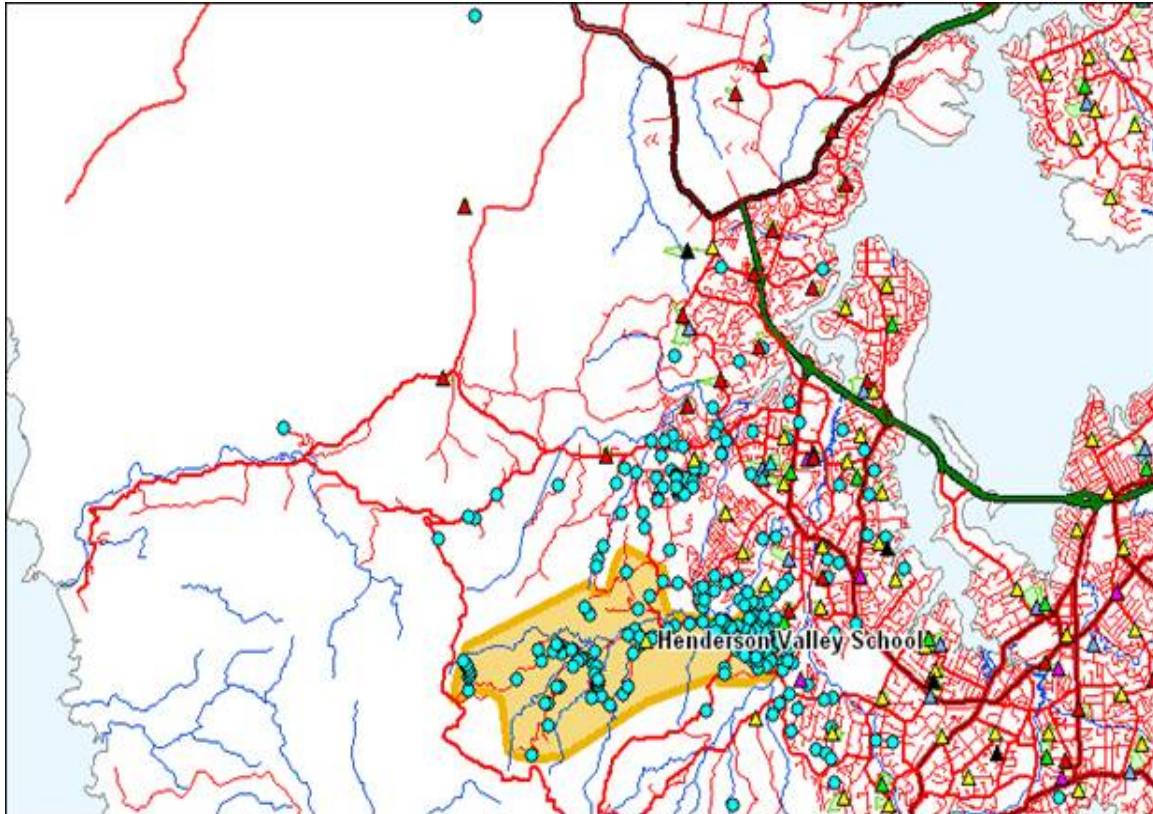


Figure 8: Henderson Valley School Zone (orange boundary is the school zone, blue dots highlights the areas where the school children reside)

5.4 Waitakere Ranges Landscape Study

Melean Absolum, 2004 (Figure 9)

The Waitakere Ranges Landscape Study identifies three bands of landscape that together form what is considered from a landscape perspective the Waitakere Ranges. These three bands consist of; the 'core' Waitakere Ranges area, the upper foothills and the lower foothills.

The majority of Waiatarua is located within the 'core' Waitakere Ranges area. This landscape band is described as having both extensive and markedly dominant native vegetation. Within this vegetation lies the development of roads, tracks, infrastructure, dams and housing; however these elements remain subservient to the native vegetation.

Whilst the 'core' Waitakere Ranges area has not been subject to further landscape assessment, the upper and lower foothills bands have. The upper foothills landscape units in particular were an important factor in defining a boundary for Waiatarua. The key landscape unit which relates to the Waiatarua area is UF6, however units UF4 and UF5 are also useful for defining the northern boundary of Waiatarua.

Landscape unit UF6 covers the area between Forest Hill Road, Kelly's Road and the Oratia Stream. It is characterised by a broad expanse of native forest within the valley giving way to residential development along ridge top roads. The area is strongly influenced by the native vegetation with the majority of residential development nestled within it. There are some examples of urbanised areas such as Bendalls Lane and Atarua Gardens. This landscape is distinctly Waiatarua and provides a strong visual boundary

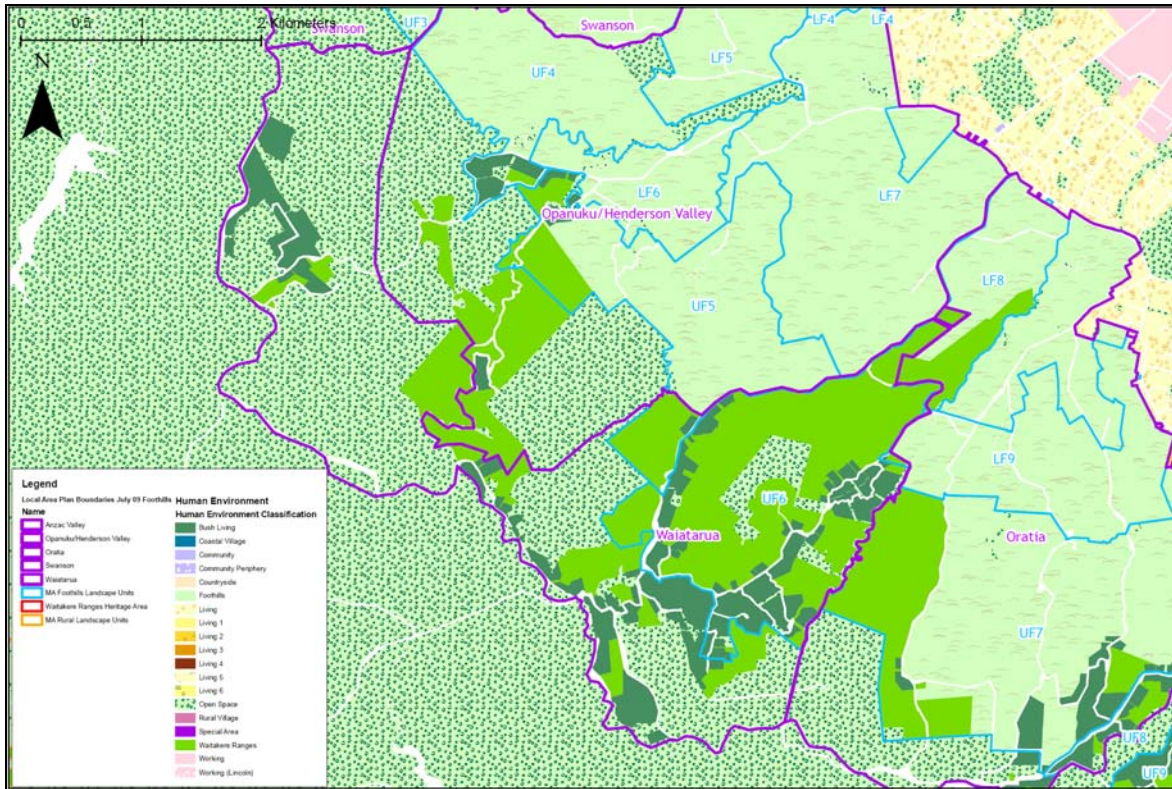
that separates the horticultural landscape of Oratia from the bush living ridges of Waiatarua.

Landscape unit UF5 includes parts of Opanuku, Grassmere, Gum and Napuka Roads and is boarded by Forest Hill Road to the east. It is characterised by a moderate to gentle rolling landform, with a rolling pastoral land with strong bush backdrop.

Landscape unit UF4 is boarded by Coulter and Christian Roads and includes parts of Mountain and Hayes Roads. It is characterised by a contrast between residential development, gardens and pasture and the steeper bush clad slopes.

Landscape units UF4 and UF5 provide a character that is more uniquely Opanuku/Henderson Valley than Waiatarua. The change in landscape from these pastoral foothills units into the upper forested reaches of the 'core' Waitakere Ranges provide a logical location for parts of the northern boundary of Waiatarua.

Landscape forms large part of Waiatarua's unique character and amenity. Using landscape units as key determining factor in locating the boundary of Waiatarua, ensures a local area that is consistent in character.



Waiatarua Study Area - Melean Absolum Landscape Units

Figure 9: Melean Absolum Landscape Units

5.5 Waitakere Ranges Regional Park (Figure 10)

The Waitakere Ranges Regional Park covers more than 16,000ha of native rainforest and coastline, and includes 250km of walking and tramping tracks. The parkland extends from Bethells Beach in the north across to the back of Henderson Valley, Waiatarua and Oratia through the Woodlands Park and Laingholm in the east.

A defining feature of Waiatarua is its location high on the ridgeline of Waitakere Ranges, where residential properties are nestled adjoining the Regional Park.

The Regional Park forms an important part of the boundary considerations, as it defines the western boundary of Waiatarua, with the majority of residential properties backing onto the Regional Park.



Figure 10: Waitakere Ranges Regional Park

5.6 Water Catchments (Figure 11)

Waiatarua is largely defined by the Upper Opanuku and Upper Oratia water catchments, with the exception of Quinns Road which falls south into the Huia catchment. The Upper Opanuku and Upper Oratia catchments are located on the eastern foothills of the Waitakere Ranges.

The water catchments are shaped by the topography of the land. In the case of the Upper Opanuku and Upper Oratia catchments their northern, east and western boundaries are defined by ridgelines falling down into a valley floor in a northerly direction. The communities within these catchments are defined by a pattern of stormwater runoff and streams that flow down from the steeper ridges. These catchment boundaries proved useful in the drafting of the local area plan boundaries in that they group areas that share physical and landform patterns.

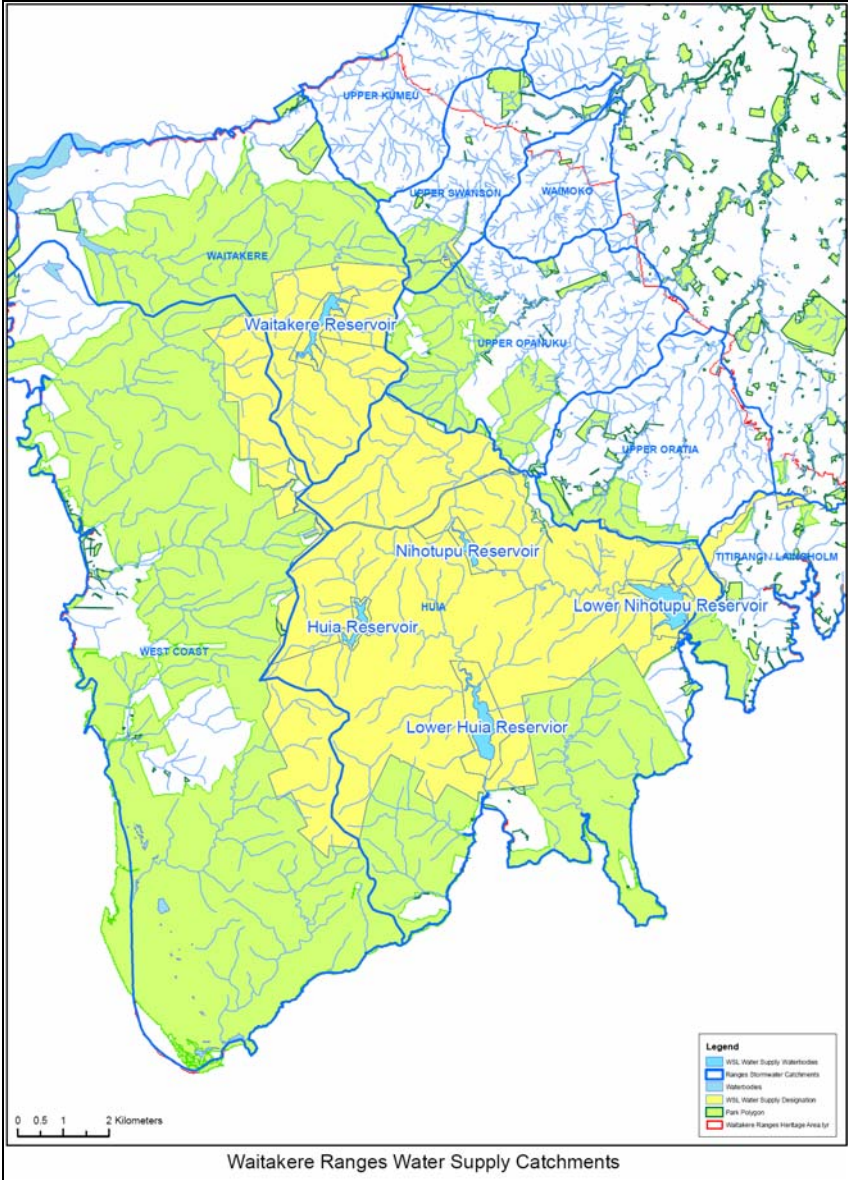


Figure 11: Water Catchments

5.7 Ecology of Waitakere's Rural Areas

Golder Associates, October 2007 (Figure 12)

The Golder Associates Report provides an ecological assessment of the rural areas in Waitakere City. The approach used was to divide the rural areas into ecological units for a consideration of their natural values, constraints and matters associated with privately owned land in the Heritage Area.

Of particular interest are the Opanuku and Oratia Headwaters units. These units are described below;

Opanuku Headwaters

The Opanuku Headwaters Ecological Unit encompasses the forested upper reaches of the Opanuku Stream catchment, including Stoney Creek, Fairy Falls Stream, Driving Stream and Parekura catchments, along with a small area of pastoral land in the Gum Camp Stream catchment. The boundaries of the rural area within the ecological unit are fragmented, as parts of these catchments are in the Regional Park. This has produced some small "outlier" clusters of residential-scale development within otherwise relatively unmodified forest. Stream gullies in the upper reaches of this ecological unit are very steep and contain intact secondary forest, while clusters of residential development occur on easier terrain.

Oratia Headwaters

The Oratia Headwaters Ecological Unit encompasses the forested upper reaches of the Oratia Stream catchment, including Potter Stream, Bendall Creek and Cantys Stream. Boundaries of this Ecological Unit are loosely delineated by Forest Hill Road to the north and west, Kellys Road and Parker Road to the north and east, and Scenic Drive to the south. This Ecological Unit also includes a small 'outlier' area of residential development along Quinns Road to the west of Scenic Drive. Topography is rolling to steep, and dissected by numerous watercourses.

The ecological characteristics of the area such as its vegetation type and fauna habitat, spatial context, and ecological 'health' issues such as pests and weeds, and fragmentation, were useful in terms of gaining an understanding of Waiatarua. However, were not significant factors in determining the location of the boundary.