

# Oratia Local Area Plan Background Report



*A discussion paper on Oratia looking at human culture, ecology, recreation, parks and landscape features.*

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Version 1



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# 1. Oratia Area

This report puts Oratia in context and describes its heritage features in greater detail than the Foothills Background report.

The Oratia LAP area is shown in **Figure 21**. It is located 6km from New Lynn, 4 km from Henderson and Titirangi and 3km from Glen Eden by road. It should be noted that the boundary of the area to be included within the Oratia Local Area Plan will be decided through the consultation process.

Further information on the proposed boundary of the Oratia LAP can be found in the *Evaluation of the Boundary for the Oratia Local Area Plan* report.

## 2. Human Culture

### 2.1 History

Oratia means “the place of persistent sun”. Both Te Kawerau a Maki and Ngati Whatua have a kaitiaki relationship to the area.

European occupation began in the Oratia area in the 1830s with kauri logging and pit-sawing stations set up in the Oratia Valley around 1845. Small creeks were dammed to float logs to the mills downstream to Falls Park in Henderson at the junction of the Oratia and Opanuku Streams. Flax mills were also located on the lower Oratia Stream (along Millbrook Road) and there was also widespread small scale gum digging, though little physical evidence remains of this latter activity.

The Oratia District School was established in 1882 with a roll of 11.

The area evolved as a centre of horticulture, viticulture and mixed farming and attracted a strong contingent of Dalmatian families. In *Waitakere Ranges* (Harvey, 2006) Rudy Sunde gives an account of Dalmatian settlement in the Oratia area. He states that the first Dalmatian (province of Croatia) settler was John Vella in 1903 with more settlers following and buying land. Most settlers were from Podgora in Dalmatia and names such as Sunde, Nola, Glucina, Borich, Erceg, and Sapich remain famous (and resident) in the Oratia area and wider Waitakere City today.

By the 1930s much of lower flanks of the Oratia valley were owned by Dalmatians who cleared the land of the remaining vegetation (the area having been logged previously), built houses, sheds and community buildings, and planted fruit trees and vines. Some of the vineyards established in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century remain to this day. Planning land use maps from the 1950s and 1970s show a range of horticultural land uses.

Dalmatian settlers also established the Viticultural Association and Oratia Fruitgrowers Association. In the 1930s the Winola Orchestra held dances in the Oratia area. In the 1920s and 1930s Oratia had a rugby club and in the 1940s lawn bowls was established. **Figure 22** shows the Oratia area in 1940 – the cadastral pattern suggested by the shelterbelts is discernable today.

**Figures 23 and 24** show historical photographs of the Oratia area.

Subdivision in the Carter and Shaw Road areas began in the 1930s and subdivision in the area to the east of the junction with West Coast Rd and Shaw Rd in the 1960s. The 1976 census showed 2560 people living in the census area approximating Oratia.

## 2.2 Cultural Heritage Sites

Cultural heritage sites in the Oratia area include:

- Oratia Cemetery – 541 West Coast Rd, Oratia. Burial sites dating from 1867 onwards. Gateway entrance built in 1935. Significance attributed to historical and visual values. Category II. Waitakere City Council is planning to complete a Conservation Plan for this site.
- Albion Vale – 527 West Coast Rd, Oratia. Built in 1879 by Thomas Parr, a pioneer orchardist and nurseryman in Oratia. It was restored to its original design after being used for many years as a roadhouse. Significance due to its relationship with the early settlers and the architectural style. The slate roof, Chicago-style windows, and rusticated weatherboards are features no longer commonly found in Oratia. The dwelling is a two-storey wooden building with hip roof verandas on both floors at the front and a hip roofed extension one storey high at the rear. The site also contains magnolia and oak trees from the original Parr Nursery which are of significant merit.
- Endt Cottage – 108 Parker Rd, Oratia. A two storey kauri weatherboard cottage, built in 1850. Its significance is attributed to historical, architectural and visual values. Category II.
- Church – 622-624 West Coast Rd, Oratia. A weatherboard building built in 1872. Its significance is attributed to historical, architectural and community values.
- Catholic Church – 565-567 West Coast Rd, Oratia. A simple rectangular timber weatherboard church, built in the early 1900s. Its significance is attributed to historical, architectural and community values. Category II.
- Jewish Prayer House – Mortuary Chapel, Oratia Cemetery, 541 West Coast Rd, Oratia. A simple kauri weather-board building built in 1886. The prayer house, also known as the Taharah House was built by T.H. Jones, whose tender of £100 was accepted by the Auckland Jewish Synagogue Committee. In 1992 it was moved from the Waikumete Cemetery when its upkeep became too costly. It was briefly used as an implement shed at the Hoani Waititi Marae, then purchased by the Oratia Cemetery Trust and restored by David Harre. Its significance is attributed to historical, architectural, cultural/community and visual values. Category II.

Waitakere City Council has commissioned heritage assessments of sites in the foothills that appear in the Cultural Heritage Inventory (that contains information on archaeological sites, historical buildings and botanical sites) but not in the District Plan, to determine whether those sites warrant inclusion in the District Plan in future. The assessments cover heritage buildings and heritage vegetation and are attached at **Appendix G**. Sites in Oratia that are recommended for inclusion in the District Plan include the following:

| Item and location   | CHI number |
|---|------------|
| Oratia Settlers Hall. A weatherboard hall with low pitched roof on West Coast Rd. | 3508       |
| Arts and Crafts style weatherboard house in West Coast Road                       | 3652       |
| Weatherboard utilitarian building (shed) on West Coast Rd                         | 3468       |
| Two storey English cottage style house in Shaw Rd                                 | 3469       |
| Sunde orchard with packing sheds  | 3675       |
| Return verandah bungalow in timber weatherboard, Shaw Rd.                         | 3512       |
| Timber weatherboard bungalow with leadlight windows in Parker Rd                  | 3464       |

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Substantial oak trees lining driveway off Parker Rd                        | 3465 |
| Single storey settlers cottage from 19 <sup>th</sup> century in Parker Rd. | 3514 |
| South American style house with brick chimneys in Parker Rd.               | 3475 |

Archaeological sites are not included in the assessments but were covered in the New Zealand Archaeological Association's Site Recording Scheme Update Project carried out in Waitakere City in 2007 (attached as **Appendix H**). Archaeological sites in the Oratia area include a mill wheel, roads, a shop, middens, terraces, pits, a dam pond and a cottage site.

### 2.3 Soil Contamination

**Figure 25** shows horticultural sites in the Oratia area in 1940, 1960 and 2000. Chemicals used in the use and development of horticultural sites, particularly prior to the 1970's, such as DDT and 245-T have the potential to cause soil contamination and need to be considered in development, subdivision and land use planning.

As a result of a city wide desktop investigation into the potential contamination of horticultural sites the Council's Planning and Regulatory Committee approved the continued placement of statements relating to horticultural sites on Land Information Memoranda. Prior to development or subdivision, a report from an appropriately qualified environmental investigation is required to determine the suitability of the sites for human habitation and health, and restrictions may be imposed on the disposal of soil removed from the site such as to a registered, sealed land fill for the protection of the environment.

Past horticultural use is not the only indication of potential soil contamination, and other activities such as motor vehicle servicing, some industrial uses, or the importation of soil from contaminated sites (either deliberately, or via runoff or spray drift) may result in soil contamination; however, the mapping of these is not as advanced as for horticultural use.

### 2.4 Development of District Planning

General information is found in section 2.3.2 of the Foothills Background Report (Development of District Planning in the Foothills) along with descriptions of each zone.

1973 County of Waitemata District Scheme: See maps in **Appendix C**. Zones in the area included Rural A Zone and Rural C Zone:

1984 Waitemata City District Plan: See maps in **Appendix D**. Zones in the area included Landscape Protection 2 Zone, Non-Urban Residential 1 Zone and Rural 3 Zone.

2003 Waitakere City Council District Plan: The Oratia Structure Plan (OSP) forms part of the District Plan as outlined below. Other parts of the Oratia area outside of the OSP are zoned as Waitakere Ranges and Bush Living.

Oratia Structure Plan: The OSP forms part of the Council's Operative District Plan. It was developed over a period of several years, from 1993 to 1997 for the Oratia Stream catchment which covers an area of almost 30 square kilometres as shown in **Figure 26**.

The OSP seeks to manage the effects of subdivision and development in the OSP area and ensures that development is sustainable from an ecological, stormwater, landscape character, geotechnical and community viewpoint. It provides an indicative subdivision concept that is based on the natural features and physical characteristics of individual sites, rather than a standard minimum lot size. Lot sizes are related to the specific environmental and physical constraints that

exist within each site and within the wider catchment. Activities that may occur on each site are determined in relation to the landscape qualities and the landform of the surrounding properties.

The OSP also identifies areas which require protection or enhancement by revegetation, fencing or the use of covenants and encumbrances on the titles. The OSP will thereby facilitate the protection and enhancement of sensitive and significant natural features that are characteristic of the local landscape. These include native bush, stream and gully systems, landscapes and heritage features, and steep and eroding areas. It will also enable people to use and develop their land in harmony with these features, and ensure adverse cumulative effects arising from sporadic subdivision and development are avoided. More information on the OSP can be found in **Appendix N**.

## 2.5 Community and Physical Infrastructure

Oratia has a primary school, kindergarten, dairy, sports clubs and a folk museum, a weekly Farmers' Market in summer and a monthly Settlers' Market.

Within Oratia land use activities are diverse, ranging from bush living in the upper reaches of Carter and Parker Roads to the expanse of remnant orchards and horticulture around West Coast Road and lower Shaw Road. There is a scattering of quarter acre sections and large lot development in between. Much of the existing residential development dates back to the days of Waitemata County and is sporadically located, frequently on the edge of the higher bush margins.

### 2.5.1 Community

The following is a summary of statistics relating to the Oratia community<sup>1</sup>:

- **Population:** 3495
- **Ethnic groups:** The Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area and the Oratia area have a significantly higher percentage of Europeans and lower percentage of other ethnic groups than Waitakere City as a whole. For Oratia the ethnic distribution is European (86%), Maori (7%), Pacific (3%) and Asian (3%).
- **Education:** Residents generally have higher levels of qualifications (32% having equivalent to a Level 5 Diploma or higher compared to 24% for the city as a whole). Oratia has comparatively higher levels of individuals with Degrees and Masters Degrees and lower levels of individuals with no qualifications when compared to the other foothills catchments.
- **Income:** The median individual income for the Oratia area is \$32470 which is \$6370 higher than Waitakere City as a whole and the highest in the foothills area. The non-foothills area of the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area is higher at \$34760. Residents on average have higher incomes in Oratia than Waitakere City, with 62% earning \$70,000 or more compared to 40% for the city as a whole. There is a significant difference in the median family income for residents aged 15+ between the foothills and Waitakere City as a whole. The Oratia area has the highest median family income in the foothills (\$86317) which is \$27817 higher than Waitakere City as a whole.
- **Age distribution:** The median age in Oratia is 38 which increased from 36 in 2001. Age distribution is shown in **Figure 27**. Oratia has a higher percentage of people aged 5-15, 30-44 and 60+ than the rest of the foothills. The Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area has a higher percentage of people ages 10-19 and 40-65 and less percentage ages 0-4, 24-35 and 65+ than Waitakere City as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> The geographic area used to represent Oratia is indicated in **Figure 21**. This is a collection of Meshblocks used as a proxy for the assumed Oratia LAP area.

- **Families:** The Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area has more one family households and less one person households than Waitakere City as a whole. In the Ranges and Oratia couples without children and with children are both higher than Waitakere City as a whole.
- **Employment:** The Ranges area has higher proportion of individuals in full and part-time employment than Waitakere City as a whole and less unemployed people. Employed Oratia residents' most frequent areas of employment are, in descending order, Oratia, Henderson, Auckland Central, Lincoln Rd, and New Lynn (closely followed by Rosebank Peninsula). More individuals work at home than in Waitakere City as a whole. The largest employers are property and business services followed by construction and cultural/recreation services.

### 2.5.2 Social Infrastructure

There is a range of social infrastructure services in the Oratia Area and these are relatively accessible. These include early childhood facilities (Playgroup and kindergarten), a local primary school (see below), a hall, a church and the Folk Museum. Oratia has an active Residents and Ratepayers Association which meets monthly. Basic shopping needs are served by the Oratia Superette and Post Centre and a service station. There is also a range of sports, youth and other community facilities available for residents and others to use in the area including Oratia Bowling Club, Western Magpies Softball Club, Otimai Girl Guide Camp, and the Henderson Riding for the Disabled. Oratia has Parrs Park (24 ha), a park of local and city-wide significance, at the junction of Parrs Cross Rd and West Coast Rd, featuring a skate board ramp, swimming facilities, basketball hoops, a playground and open space for ball sports, especially soccer. Beside the park is one of Waitakere's urban marae, Hoani Waititi with an attached Kohanga Reo.

While there are no doctors listed in the Oratia area, there are doctors' offices located in Glen Eden, Henderson and Titirangi and an osteopathic clinic on West Coast Rd.

If demographic trends continue there will be a significant increase in individuals aged 65+ in the next 5 – 30 years which will increase pressures on health care, health and social services organisations and accessibility.

Assuming the demographic trends and low transience levels in the Oratia catchment continue, the current high levels of 10 – 20 year olds may be forming families over the next 5 – 15 years. There may be a case for encouraging additional early childhood provision in the area. There may also be additional pressure for primary health care, maternity services, and housing. More information on the social infrastructure of Oratia can be found in **Appendix O**.

### 2.5.3 Oratia School

Oratia School had 510 students in November 2008<sup>2</sup> and is on the corner of West Coast and Shaw Roads, Oratia. The school was established in 1882 with 11 students. **Figure 28** shows both the Oratia School zone and where students attending the school live. High school age students from this area generally go to Green Bay and Henderson High Schools.

Oratia School has bronze status as an Enviro School and is working toward silver. Some Enviro School projects that are underway at the school are:

- planting vegetable gardens;
- growing seedlings for planting;
- planting a small orchard of fruit trees; and
- beautifying school grounds.

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<sup>2</sup> 2008 Education Review Office Report: [http://www.oratia.school.nz/Site/B\\_O\\_T/Most\\_recent\\_E\\_R\\_O\\_Report.ashx](http://www.oratia.school.nz/Site/B_O_T/Most_recent_E_R_O_Report.ashx)

## 2.5.4 Employment and Businesses

In the Oratia area there are higher levels of individuals who work from home, compared to the city as a whole. Property and business services are the most numerous business sectors, followed by the construction industry and cultural and recreational services. Levels of employment are significantly higher in Oratia than in the foothills as a whole. A variety of small businesses operate in the area including a number of horticultural enterprises:

- Garden related activities (gardening, flowers, landscape design, nurseries). Oratia has a number of nurseries including Oratia Native Plant Nursery, Landsendt Subtropical Plants and others.
- Orchards/vineyards including Gold West Orchards, Dragicevich and Sons, Sapich Bros and Artisan Wines.

There are two markets, one weekly farmers market held at Artisan Wines and the monthly Settlers Market, held at the Settlers Hall. The Bella Rakha Retreat Centre (formerly Knock Na Gree) set in 13 ha of bush and run until recently as a Catholic youth camp now offers meditation retreats . A list of businesses is found in **Appendix O**.

## 2.5.5 Subdivision

The population density for the Oratia area is 0.3 people per hectare which is about the same as the other foothill catchments. **Figure 5** shows subdivision potential for the Oratia Area. It shows that there are a large number of sites can be subdivided in the area which has the potential to change the character of the area significantly.

For parts of the potential Oratia LAP area subdivision has been established through the Oratia Structure Plan as outlined in section 2.4 of this report and in **Appendix P**. For other parts of the potential Oratia LAP area, subdivision is managed through the subdivision rules of the District Plan that apply to the site based on zoning.

There are also a number of vacant sites within the area that could have dwellings constructed on them without subdivision which will also contribute to change in the area.

## 2.5.6 Housing

The Oratia area is made up of a mix of housing types from more substantial farmhouses on farmland blocks of at least 4 hectares to large family homes built in the 1970s and 1980s. There are significantly less 3 bedroom homes than other parts of Waitakere City and more 4 and 5 bedroom homes. This is a similar trend in other parts of the ranges. Home ownership is significantly higher than Waitakere City as a whole and in the Oratia area is the highest of the foothills. House size has increased dramatically in Oratia, with average house size in the 2000s almost double average house size in 1900 (see **Figure 29** below). Key facts for the Oratia area are:

- Occupied dwellings: 1170
- Unoccupied dwellings: 81
- Average household size: 2.99 which is the same as for Waitakere City as a whole. Average household size for the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area is 2.82.
- Average weekly rent: \$378

## 2.5.7 Water

Wastewater provision for Oratia is in the form of on-site systems for the most part although the area to the west of Parrs Cross Rd/Pine Avenue and the West Coast Rd area up to the junction with Shaw Rd has reticulated wastewater. The water supply for the LAP area is reticulated. There is some reticulation of stormwater, mainly in relation to road run-off.

## 2.5.8 Transport

See **Figure 11** for information on bus, train and cycle routes within the foothills. The majority of people in the Oratia area have access to a motor vehicle. Of those who go to work most go by car with very low use of public transport.

**Trains:** The nearest train station is at Sunnyvale, currently with one train every 15 minutes each way at peak times and projected frequency of one train every 6 minutes by 2026. . The park and ride provides parking for 109 cars with potential for an additional 100 spaces. In the future further space will be made in the park and ride area at the train station and train frequency will also increase with electrification of the train lines.

**Buses:** The foothills area is poorly served by buses. The bus service from Henderson to Waikarua (3 buses per day) via West Coast and Forest Hill Rd is under threat because of low patronage. Two or three private buses a day take visitors to the Arataki Visitors Centre, using Shaw Rd in Oratia. A bylaw forbids passage of heavy vehicles on Scenic Drive between Shaw Rd and Woodlands Park Rd. There are approximately 3 buses a day to Arataki along Shaw road – two tourist buses and one for school trips

**Private vehicles:** 7,000 vehicles a day pass along West Coast Rd. Based on the city average increase of 2% p.a. this would increase to 11,500 vehicles per day by 2031. Parrs Cross Rd at the junction with Seymour Road carries around 15,000 vehicles a day while Scenic Drive east of Shaw Rd has approximately 1,500 traffic movements a day. Crash statistics from the NZ Transport Agency for the period 2004 – 2009 show 8 crashes for Shaw Rd, 6 for Carter Rd and 3 for Parker Rd. Scenic Drive in the Oratia area recorded around 11 crashes for the same period.

**Footpaths:** footpaths run along West Coast Road (on the eastern side only) to Parker Road and also Shaw Road for a few kilometres. There is also a track from Arataki (Scenic Drive) through to Parker Road. There is a walking connection from Oratia village to Arataki Visitors Centre. Arataki from the end of Parker Rd. The ARC plans a 'Long Trail' which starts at Titirangi (accessible by bus from downtown), then Arataki Centre, Huia, Whatipu and Piha, ending at Swanson railway station. The 2004 Oratia Reserves and Public Access Plan in **Figure 30** includes proposed walkways through the Oratia area.

**Cycling:** Oratia is connected to Auckland CBD along off road tracks via the Oratia stream walkway. The Oratia walk/cycleway connects Parrs Cross Rd to Millbrook Rd and provides a connection to Sunnyvale Station.

The Oratia school has walking school buses and also 4 school bus routes which are:

- **Bus 1:** TV Mast, West Coast Road – Bus leaves at 8.20 am from the TV mast, picking children up in West Coast Road and then going up Parker Road reaching the top at about 8.35 am. It then returns down Parker Road to the school.
- **BUS 2:** Leaves Piha at 8.00 am and travels via Scenic Drive.
- **BUS 3:** Bus enters Carter Road at 8.00 am and collects passengers on Carter and Shaw Roads. It arrives at school at 8.20 am.
- **BUS 4:** Leaves corner Pine Ave / Forest Hill Road at 8.30 am and travels up Forest Hill Road and down West Coast Road to school.

## 2.5.9 Recreation

See section 3.4 of the Foothills Background report for general information on recreational and parkland in the foothills.

There are a range of recreational users of the Oratia area including:

- Glen Eden walkers and Waikarua walkers

- Glen Eden runners and New Lynn runners
- Cycling groups
- Farmers market and Settlers market
- Oratia District School
- Oratia Bowling Club
- Oratia Indoor Bowls
- Oratia Folk Museum
- Oratia Kindergarten
- Oratia Playgroup
- Oratia Scouts
- Otimai (girl guides centre)
- Oratia United Soccer and Sports Club
- Oratia Spinning and Craft Group
- Waitarua table tennis club
- Waitarua Volunteer Fire brigade

### 2.5.10 Reserves and Parks

Waitakere City Council manages a number of reserves and parks in the Oratia area while land close to the Scenic Drive is managed by the Auckland Regional Council as part of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. This is shown in **Figure 19**. Tracks from the Arataki area link through to Parker Road, Oratia. This track is an unformed road.

The closest Regional Park activity nodes are

- Parkinsons Lookout: a lookout and picnic area off the Scenic Drive offering panoramic views over the foothills and city;
- Rose Hellaby House: An historic homestead with period gardens which has panoramic views over the foothills and city; and
- Arataki Visitors Centre: the primary visitor information centre for the Regional Park. Contains administration, public education, work depot and nursery. It is the gateway to the Ranges and had 155,000 visitors in 2007/8.

More information on these activity nodes and their management is found in section 55 of the Regional Parks Management Plan. At present it is uncertain whether the Regional Parks area would be included in the Oratia LAP.

Parks and reserves managed by Waitakere City Council in the Oratia area include:

- Rimu Esplanade (local Green Network bush reserve in Rimu Rd)
- Ruru Reserve (local Green Network bush reserve in West Coast Rd)
- Nicholas Reserve (neighbourhood park in West Coast Rd)
- Oratia Hall Reserve (local community facility in West Coast Rd – recent land acquisition has increased size of reserve and will be planted with apple trees)
- Shaw Rd Reserve
- Oratia Esplanade Reserve
- West Coast Rd Esplanade (local Green Network esplanade reserve)
- Cochrane Stream Esplanade Reserve (West Coast Rd)
- Carter Rd Esplanade (local Green Network esplanade reserve)
- Handley Plantation Reserve (local Green Network bush reserve in West Coast Rd)
- Kauri Reserve and Kauri Plant Reserve (local Green Network bush reserve in West Coast Rd)

The Waitakere Ward Local Reserves Management Plan is currently being prepared and covers some of the Oratia reserves including the Oratia Hall Reserve and Oratia Drive Accessway. A Reserve Management Plan for the Oratia/Opanuku Stream Corridor, planned for 2009/2010 has been deferred.

### 3. Ecological Features

See section 3.3 of the Foothills Background Paper for general information on ecological features in the foothills.

#### 3.1 Flora and Fauna

Parts of the Oratia Local Area are denoted significant vegetation in the Waitakere District Plan (Policy Map 3.5A and see Natural Environment Features Map in **Figure 17**) and there are areas of outstanding native fauna habitat (District Plan Policy Map 3.5B).

**Figure 17** shows the natural environment features in the Oratia area. It also identifies bush protection areas, streamside restoration area and revegetation areas as identified in the Oratia Structure Plan. Protection and restoration of these areas would occur alongside subdivision of individual properties in the Structure Plan area. The map also shows possible ecological linkage opportunities. Several restoration projects are occurring in the area including restoration of a Council owned reserve on Autumn Ave and a Weedfree Waitakere streamside restoration project.

The *Ecology of Waitakere's Rural Areas Report* (Kingett Mitchell Ltd, 2007) provides information on the seral forest composition in the Oratia area as outlined in the following paragraphs. The main forest species in the gullies and wetter sites of the Upper Oratia area are dense kanuka and secondary kauri-podocarp-broadleaf forest, kahikatea and broadleaved trees (puriri, karaka, kohekohe), interspersed with nikau and mamuku. On upper slopes and ridges where drier conditions are present, kauri, kanuka, tanekaha, totara and rewarewa predominate.

Further down the foothills undulating topography dominates with short steep slopes around catchment headwaters. Numerous watercourses intersect the catchment. A number of small (less than 2ha) indigenous broadleaf forest remnants, and a stand of mature secondary kauri-podocarp forest adjoins regional parkland adjacent to Scenic Drive. Patchy, regenerating kanuka forest and scrub mosaics cover a substantial portion of Cochrane, Kaurimu and Sharpe Stream catchments and provide connectivity with adjacent catchments including Big Muddy Creek and Upper Oratia.

#### 3.2 Oratia Headwaters & Oratia Structure Plan Ecological Units

##### Oratia Headwaters

The Oratia Headwaters ecological unit (**Figure 31**) is delineated by Forest Hill Rd to the North and west, Kellys Rd and Parker Rd to the north and east and Scenic Drive to the south. The unit contains a series of steep, dissected stream gullies surrounding the upper Oratia Stream. The vegetation is dense kanuka and secondary kauri-podocarp-broadleaf forest. Kahikatea and broadleaved trees (puriri, karaka and kohekohe) are the main forest species in gullies and wetter sites, interspersed with nikau and mamaku. Kauri, kanuka, tanekaha, totara and rewarewa dominate drier upper slopes and ridges. Forest areas are at a fairly early successional stage and within residential areas their margins are degraded.

Banded kokupu, longfin & shortfin eels, torrentfish, common & Crans bully are present in the watercourses within the ecological unit. Inanga were not recorded as part of this survey, however the Waitakere Freshwater Fisheries Monitoring Programme (Boffa Miskell 2007) recorded inanga at three sites along Oratia Stream (Aetna PI, upstream of Parrs Cross Rd and Kelly's Rd).

Weed infestations occur around all residential areas and along roadsides and berms.

## Oratia Structure Plan Ecological Unit

The Oratia Structure Plan (OSP) ecological unit (**Figure 31**) comprises undulating, short steep slopes around the catchment headwaters and intersected by numerous watercourses including Allen Swamp, Malam Gully, Cochrane, Cantwell, Sunde, Cable, Kaurimu and Sharpe Streams. Most of the streams are small but subject to high peak flows. Pastoral/horticultural land uses are being replaced with lifestyle block subdivision.

The OSP ecological unit is of value as a buffer between with the urban fringe and the Ranges. It contains remnant forest typically less than 2 hectares in size. Otherwise the landscape is a mosaic of pastoral land, old orchards and lifestyle block developments, interspersed with hedgerows, small patches of mixed exotic and indigenous scrub and scattered old pines and macrocarpas.

Retaining vegetated waterways, green corridors and open undeveloped spaces in the Waitakere Foothills is important to ensure the long-term viability of the local long-tailed bat population.

Many watercourses within the OSP ecological unit are identified as 'streamside enhancement' or vegetation enhancement' areas. As with the headwaters ecological unit, banded kokupu, longfin & shortfin eels, torrentfish, common & Crans bully are present in the watercourses within the ecological unit. The absence of inanga may indicate barriers to fish passage downstream.

The OSP has already been assessed for subdivision potential according to natural and physical constraints including land stability, ecological values, landscape/rural character, stormwater and wastewater management and local heritage sites. Further development potential beyond the extent envisaged by the OSP poses the risk of compromising the viability of the area as a buffer to the Waitakere Ranges.

Restoration potential includes protection and retention of bush cover, stream restoration (Cochrane, Kaurimu and Sharpe Stream) and enhancement of fish passage and support and incentives for community weed control.

Further information on the ecology of the Oratia area can be found in **Appendix Q**. Information on plant species for the Oratia Catchment can be found in **Appendix R**.

### Monitoring

Ecological monitoring in the Oratia area includes:

- Project Twin Streams Catchment Monitoring Sediment Quality Monitoring showing higher levels of contamination and erosion at downstream sites
- Project Twin Streams Catchment Monitoring Water Quality Monitoring
- Project Twin Streams Catchment Monitoring Ecological Monitoring at Potters Stream and Oratia Stream (West Coast Rd and Parrs Cross Rd)
- Waitakere Freshwater Fisheries Monitoring Programme with monitoring sites at Parrs Cross Rd, Aetna Place and Kellys Rd.
- Waitakere City Biodiversity Monitoring Programme with some monitoring sites in Oratia including Kelly's Esplanade which was sampled for avifauna, pests, vegetation & phenology, terrestrial invertebrates and lizards.

Further information on the monitoring referred to above can be found in **Appendix Q**.

### 3.3 Oratia Stream Catchment

The Oratia Stream Catchment covers an area of almost 30 square kilometres of Waitakere City. The stream originates in the Waitakere Ranges, from a maximum elevation of 390 metres and flows northwards through Oratia to the Henderson Creek and then to the Waitemata Harbour.

The upper catchment of Oratia comprises the relatively steep, bush clad northern slopes of the Waitakere Ranges. This area is dissected with steep gullies. The middle reaches of the catchment consist of rolling ridges and valleys, where the soil tends to be poorly drained clay loams. The lower part of the catchment becomes gently rolling to flat alluvial terraces. The stream channel is cut well down into the surrounding landscape, with little flood plain area.

The lower reaches of the catchment fall towards a central basin focused upon West Coast Road with side valleys between Glengarry and Shaw Roads, and also between Carter and Parker Roads. Stream systems lie at the foot of all three main valleys, and the ridgelines that carry Glengarry, Carter and Parker Roads climb towards a main ridge along which Scenic Drive runs.

Streams in the Oratia area include:

- Allen Swamp
- Malam Gully
- Oratia Stream
- Potter Stream
- Cantys Stream
- Cochrane Stream
- Cantwell Stream
- Sundae Stream
- Cable Stream
- Kaurimu Stream
- Sharpe Stream
- Bendall Creek

The majority of the streams are small but subject to periodic high flows. Those in the lower reaches on the catchment act as a buffer between the urban fringe and the forested Ranges.

The Oratia area is part of the Henderson Creek Catchment for Project Twin Streams (PTS) with funding covering the restoration of the lower Oratia Stream. The main aim of PTS is to create a more sustainable catchment and improve water quality in Waitakere City. PTS focuses on restoring stream banks but also has a vision of working with local communities near streams. The project looks at use of land within the stream catchment, households becoming more sustainable and using cycle and walkways to reconnect communities while providing opportunities for recreation. The next steps for PTS involve innovative stormwater solutions and working on the sorts of human behaviour that cause pollution.

Wai care groups monitor the lower reaches of the Oratia Stream. Restoration of the Kaurimu Stream in Oratia is underway through collaboration between local community and Ecomatters Trust.

## **4. Landscape and Landform Features**

See section 3.2 of the Foothills Background Report for general information on landscape and landform features in the foothills.

The Regional Policy Statement defines the majority of the Waitakere Ranges as an area of significant natural landscape quality. The core ranges, upper slopes of the foothills and some of the lower slopes (including the area south of Forest Hill Rd and the area around Parker and Carter Rd) are denoted as Outstanding Landscapes (quality rating of 6 and 7). Parts of the lower foothills are denoted Regionally Outstanding Landscapes (quality rating of 5). Proposed Plan Change 8 to the RPS denotes all the areas referred to above as outstanding natural landscape.

The District Plan describes much of the Oratia area as outstanding landscape (Policy Map 3.6B).

In the Oratia area the upper catchment is relatively steep and bush clad, dissected by steep gullies while the middle catchment has rolling ridgelines and valleys. The lower catchment is more undulating topography. In the report *Waitakere Ranges Landscape Study: Stage 1* (Absolum, 2004), the Oratia area includes:

- Core ranges: Those areas where native vegetation is extensive and markedly dominant. The area is also identified by the landform beneath this vegetation.
- Upper foothills: Contains many of the characteristics of the Core Ranges however development within the bush clad slopes is more extensive than in the Core Ranges. In Oratia grazing and horticultural land uses in the past saw extensive clearance, particularly of the flatter ridge tops. These areas include broad expanses of native forest with some residential development and moderate to steep slopes. The landscape is strongly influenced by native vegetation with horticultural crops and grazing in some areas.
- Lower foothills: Generally lower and less steep with fewer or more scattered patches of remnant native vegetation. In Oratia these are generally east facing with much horticultural activity including vineyard, shelterbelts and orchards which dominate the character.

Detailed information on the landscape units of the foothills are in **Appendix L**.

The report identifies the following landscape threats in the Oratia area:

- In upper catchment:
  - Inappropriate residential development
  - Suburban details being established such as kerb and channel and street lighting.
- In lower catchment:
  - Inappropriate residential development – prominent/striking colour or design
  - Small lot sizes resulting in inadequate separation between developments – loss of rural character
  - Extensive vegetation removal/earthworks
  - Removal of shelterbelts and orchards

The report also identifies possible activities that may be appropriate in parts of the Oratia area depending on the landscapes' ability to absorb certain forms of development. These include:

- Upper catchment: retirement and visitor activities; and
- Lower catchment: retirement activities with a broad range of other activities also appropriate in some areas of the lower catchment including commercial/retail, recreation, public buildings, education, worship and visitor.

## 5. Previous Community Consultation in Oratia

Consultation has occurred with the Oratia community regarding a number of proposals since the early 1990s. During this consultation the main issues identified were:

- Amenity: differing views on appropriate amenity for the area;
- Orchards: views from retaining the orchards for the character they provide through to a belief they are not economically viable;
- Footpaths: for walkability in the community while retaining rural character;
- Subdivision: differing views on appropriate levels of subdivision if any; and
- Economic development.

Consultation that has occurred includes:

| Year      | Consultation  |
|-----------|---|
| 1992/1993 | Consultation prior to drafting the district plan including surveys by Oratia Residents and Ratepayers and Waitakere City Council. |

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 1995 - 1997 | Oratia Structure Plan public meetings, surveys, liaison groups and submission process.   |
| 2001-2004   | Oratia Reserves and Public Access Plan.  |
| 2002        | Oratia Residents and Ratepayers submitted on Proposed Regional Plan: Air Land and Water regarding the copper contamination threshold. Also met with Ministry for the Environment on this matter. |
| 2003-2005   | Lower Oratia Reserves Management Plan (outside Heritage Area) combined with Project Twin Streams walk and cycleways consultation.  |
| 2003        | Telephone surveys on public perceptions of the Waitakere Ranges and community workshops on values and threats.   |
| 2005        | ARC telephone survey on protection of the Ranges and foothills. Public open days and meetings were also held.  |

### 5.1 District Plan Consultation

In 1992 and 1993 consultation occurred prior to drafting the District Plan including group meetings, public meetings and two questionnaires (Oratia Residents and Ratepayers 1992 and WCC 1993/4). This also included a review of environmental policy with a study area bounded by Scenic Drive, Glengarry Rd, Forest Hill Rd and Parris Cross Rd. Stakeholders consulted were:

- Oratia Fruitgrowers
- Residents from Upper Shaw Rd, Carter Rd, Waiatarua, Parker Rd
- Oratia Residents and Ratepayers
- Waitakere Ranges Protection Society

The following matters were raised:

| Subject matter                   | Summary of comment  |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Amenity                          | Community feeling, popular school   |
| Amenity                          | Natural way of life, peace, ancient landscapes, illusion of countryside, flora/fauna, school  |
| Amenity                          | Nooks and crannies, variety, complexity   |
| Amenity                          | Community linked to land. Physically discrete area creates identity. Families. Character of landscape with open land and bush adds to diversity, lost if there is too much subdivision. Quietness is valued, too many neighbours would destroy this. Important to many, large undeveloped area between W. Coast Rd and Parker Rd, in the gully and streams is highly valued |
| Amenity                          | Rural area close to city. Strong community in area and large increase would destroy the sense of community.   |
| Amenity                          | Increase in population would result in loss of sense of community   |
| Economic development             | Packing sheds as sites for home occupation – Oratia as garden centre of city – showcase plants  |
| Economic development             | Glasshouses not desirable – alternatives to apple growing might be unattractive visually  |
| Economic development             | Alternatives to traditional growing – jam, cider production, potential for unsprayed fruit, orchard tours,  |
| Environmental protection         | Need to retain bush, control weeds. Concern that orchard spraying harms bird life   |
| Environmental protection – water | Streams polluted. Contamination by septic tanks   |

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| quality                    |   |
| Orchards                   | No longer local market for fruit. Cost of production exceeds returns – canter and low fertility. Pockets of fertile soil in Holdens Rd                                  |
| Orchards                   | Orchards low yield. Children not interested in family business. Conflict between residential development and spraying. Some orchards leased out or run on weekend basis |
| Orchards                   | Some orchards still viable. Soils fertile. Need to change to more popular fruit varieties.  |
| Orchards                   | Spraying unpopular with lifestyle block owners  |
| Orchards                   | Risk of disease if orchards left untended. Orchards costly to maintain  |
| Orchards                   | Don't want too many neighbours, consider rates relief for orchardists if they are considered a valued resource by the city  |
| Infrastructure             | Pressure from new residents for better roads, street lights, kerb/channel. Feeling that these are unnecessary and would detract from special character                  |
| Infrastructure -roads      | Kerb and channel not desirable. Desire for country lanes not roads  |
| Infrastructure - roads     | Look at 'psychological' ways of slowing traffic, not just engineering methods   |
| Infrastructure - roads     | Traffic too fast, roads too narrow  |
| Infrastructure – footpaths | Provide paths bottom of Carter Rd – resolve problem of slopes by boardwalk, gravel area, paths through orchards   |
| Social infrastructure      | Create local employment. Market town. Social evolution – not just hall but self-sustaining community  |
| Social infrastructure      | Monopoly of Soccer Club. Expensive to maintain land   |
| Subdivision                | Push for subdivision. Land not profitable for orcharding.   |
| Subdivision                | Carter Rd – increased development would adversely affect pleasantness of area and property values   |
| Subdivision                | Subdivision – necessary for retiring orchardists  |
| Subdivision                | Opposition to large earthworks and intensive development  |
| Tourism                    | Develop orchards into tourist attractions with restaurants, tours, processing displays.   |
| Tourism                    | Eco-tourism possibilities. Packing sheds as sites for home occupation – Oratia as garden centre of city – showcase plants   |

Surveys by Oratia R&R in 1992 and WCC in 1993 raised the following issues:

- Valley sufficiently serviced by shops and other facilities;
- All new housing should preserve ground water quality and separate black and grey water;
- Economic relief should be given to orchardists;
- Orchards should remain as orchards;
- New developments should be required to plant 25% in trees/landscaping. Prefer housing screened by planting;
- 'Rural' nature of roads adequate;
- Did not want reticulated sewage system; and
- Divided on speed bumps to slow traffic but common concern was fast traffic and narrow roads.

## 5.2 Oratia Structure Plan

During the preparation of the OSP, the Council consulted with land owners, interest groups, statutory bodies and the Oratia community. Between the end of 1993 and 1995 intensive work was carried out with the community. Local residents attended meetings, took part in surveys and liaison groups, and completed questionnaires about the attributes and qualities of the area that they value. They also identified the level of services and amenity that they believe is appropriate to retain the character of Oratia. Residents identified the following valued features:

- the native bush;

- the open space, rural character and landscape;
- heritage areas; and
- the productive land uses, including the orchard activities.

Feedback from submissions in August 1995 and from Oratia landowners who attended a public meeting on 6 April 1995 provided the following comments:

- Desire for fruit trees in orchards to be maintained to provide screening of properties from roadsides;
- Border roadsides with planting other than pines when orchards are subdivided;
- Community centre should be planned – designate now;
- Encourage planting on southern side of ridge building platforms;
- TDRs discussed;
- Any support available for orchardists wanting to continue e.g.: rates relief/economic relief;
- Support ridge protection;
- Planting of native trees supported; and
- Can council control building colour.

312 submissions to the OSP were received following notification in October 1995. In these the major issue was subdivision with some residents wanting the provision to subdivide their properties and some wanting none. Other issues that were raised included:

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Footpaths         | Don't understand why footpaths ruin rural character. Could be grass/pavers etc. Road safety important |
| Community "heart" | Add plan for community heart for Oratia   |
| Reserves          | Opposing or supporting more reserves for Oratia   |
| Traffic           | Install calming measures for traffic.   |
| Roads             | Inadequate for increased population   |

Council hearings were held in March/April 1997. From these 11 references to the Environment Court were received with hearings in August 1998 which were adjourned to November 1998. A new Council was elected in October 1998 who reviewed its position on the OSP. They recommended that specific consultants develop a report on the OSP subdivisional standards in particular investigating proposals by Mr McShane (who was acting on behalf of a number of landowner appellants). This report was introduced to the Environment Court as evidence. The final OSP retained the main elements of the original OSP but changed the status of applications for subdivision that involved departures from the structure plan provisions to make them a little easier.

### 5.3 Oratia Reserves and Public Access Plan 2001-2004

Extensive community consultation was undertaken regarding the Oratia Reserves and Public Access Plan. Four drafts of this plan were prepared. Additional issues that were raised by residents during the consultation process include:

| Subject of submission | Submission summary  |
|-----------------------|---|
| Domain location       | Put domain at southern end of Shaw Rd-benefit a broader population, would like to see it fenced off and establish a native fauna breeding programme |
| Domain                | Support the development of a domain   |
| Apple trees           | Against planting apple trees as typical of Oratia- need too much attention (pruning and spraying)   |
| Weed control          | Provide support for land owners efforts e.g. twice yearly neighbourhood skips for weeds, encourage community working bees on parks and reserves     |

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Proposed domain            | Put a public tennis court on proposed domain site, all resident have large lots but no recreational activities                    |
| Walkways and public access | Much concern from range of submitters about Bridle Trail. Don't want horses using it, don't want people walking across their land |
| Footpaths                  | Requests for footpaths on main road   |

When the Final Reserve and Public Access Plan was taken to committee for sign off, a summary of the main issues of the plan were presented. They included:

| <b>Summary of issues in the Agenda report on Reserves and Public Access Plan 2004</b> |   |
|---|---|
| Esplanade reserves  | Some submissions opposed taking of land for esplanade reserves resulted in properties removed from plan where no longer subdividable and esplanade reserves may not be taken and streams not required width                             |
| Bush reserves   | Area allocated for bush reserves in 2001 plan unrealistic (maintenance and cost to purchase)- total area cut- only bush of best quality included  |
| Community domain  | Decision made to purchase land for a local community domain   |
| Walkways and public access ways   | Revised plan reduced the number of proposed walkways and access ways  |
| Bridle trail  | Due to a lack of support, trail removed from the plan   |
| Footpaths   | Support for footpaths alongside main roads. Requests forwarded to Roading department, footpaths on Council's priority list but cannot be funded through the subdivision reserves fund (as suggested by submitters)                      |
| Other issues raised   | No intention to create walkways through private property, funding from subdivision only used for development of Reserves in Oratia, not elsewhere in the city, lack of detail in the plan   |
|   | A total of 4 plans have been produced, each one revised as a result of community feedback and submissions, final version is the map entitled Final Oratia Reserves and Public Access Plan (30 June 2004) is shown in <b>Figure 30</b> . |

## 5.4 Other Consultation

### Proposed Regional Plan: Air, Land and Water:

Oratia Residents and Ratepayers submitted on the Proposed Regional Plan: Air, Land and Water to withdraw the threshold levels of contamination proposed in the plan, to determine activity status for stormwater discharge from contaminated land, until further studies had been completed. Copper was the main problem with some properties in Oratia over the copper threshold. WCC organised meetings with MFE representative in 2002 to discuss issues.

### Lower Oratia Reserves Management Plan and Project Twin Streams walk/cycleways consultation:

The Lower Oratia Reserves Management Plan (RMP) was notified in 2003 for an area outside the Heritage Area. The consultation was combined with the PTS walk/cycleway consultation in 2004.

Preparation of the Draft Lower Oratia Stream Reserves Management Plan involved consultation with iwi representatives and extensive public. A general background document was distributed to 3000 households. Two open days were held, and the first open day in Oratia Esplanade Reserve in October was combined with a planting day. This was attended by about 40 members of the local community and from the MacLaren Park project. The second open day was held in Serwayne Place in November and was attended by some 40 community members from Serwayne Place and the surrounding streets.

In terms of the walk/cycleway, five written submissions were received which generally expressing support for a walk/cycleway but with concerns about maintenance of the paths and public safety.

The draft RMP was notified again (with PTS additions) in 2005. Consultation included drop-in days, public meetings, letters and brochures. Heritage Area groups consulted including Oratia R & R, Henderson Valley Residents Association and Henderson Valley Primary.

#### Heritage Area Bill Consultation:

- 2003 Waitakere City Council telephone survey on public perceptions about the Ranges;
- Workshops 2004. Comments included:
  - Preserve character of foothills (social, visual, history)
  - “Tuscany of Auckland” – small farms to provide food for area and unique lifestyle
  - Do not promote visitors
  - Control pests and animals – more encouragement and assistance would be good.
  - No subdivision/allow subdivision. Compensation for keeping and maintaining land for others to enjoy.
  - Allow for rural pursuits to continue
- Meetings with Opanuku landowners;
- 2003 community workshops on values and threats (foothills locations included Oratia, Waiatarua, Swanson );
- ARC/WCC special newsletter and questionnaire on proposed legislation;
- 2005 ARC telephone survey (40% of respondents from Waitakere) on protection of the Ranges and foothills. Questions about subdivision and development in the Ranges and foothills; and
- Public meetings and drop-in days in 2005 (foothills locations included Oratia, Henderson Valley, Swanson etc). Issues raised relating to Oratia include:
  - Develop but in keeping with rural feel
  - No cat policy
  - No subdivision/subdivision
  - Orchards appropriate/obsolete

## **6. Figures**

- Figure 5:** Subdivision Potential for existing lots in the Foothills area
- Figure 11:** Key Transport and Access Infrastructure within the Foothills
- Figure 17:** Natural Environment Features in the Waitakere Ranges Foothills
- Figure 19:** Waitakere City Parks and Reserves in the Waitakere Ranges Foothills
- Figure 21:** Map of the Oratia LAP Area (need actual Oratia map here)
- Figure 22:** Oratia 1940
- Figure 23:** Old Post Office and bus shelter, Oratia.
- Figure 24:** Hillsides above Oratia Stream to peaks by West Coast Road
- Figure 25:** Horticultural sites in the Oratia area 1940-2000
- Figure 26:** Oratia Structure Plan Area
- Figure 27:** Age distribution comparison for the Oratia area and the Waitakere Ranges foothills
- Figure 28:** Oratia School zone and where students live
- Figure 29:** Oratia Area House Size by Year Built Analysis
- Figure 30:** Final Oratia Reserves and Public Access Plan 2004
- Figure 31:** Oratia headwater and structure plan ecological units

## **7. Appendices**

|                    |  |
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| <b>APPENDIX C:</b> | <b>Planning Maps from Waitemata District Scheme 1973</b>           |
| <b>APPENDIX D:</b> | <b>Planning Maps from the Waitemata City District Plan 1984</b>    |
| <b>APPENDIX G:</b> | <b>Local Area Plan Heritage Assessments</b>                        |
| <b>APPENDIX H:</b> | <b>NZ Archaeological Association Site Recording Scheme Upgrade</b> |
| <b>APPENDIX L:</b> | <b>Landscape Units in the Foothills</b>                            |
| <b>APPENDIX N:</b> | <b>Oratia and the Structure Plan General Information</b>           |
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