

Waiatarua Local Area Plan Background Report



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

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Version 1



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1. Waiatarua Area

Waiatarua is a settlement at the top of the Waitakere Ranges as shown in **Figure 32**. The area is predominantly native bush with pockets of housing.

It should be noted that the boundary of the area to be included within the Waiatarua Local Area Plan will be decided through the consultation process.

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

2. Human Culture

2.1 History

The Waiatarua area was originally referred to as Nihotupu. In her book *Song of Two Waters: An Early History of Waiatarua* (1997) Jeanne Wade suggests that the name Waiatarua developed from visitors in the area who visited the Waiatarua Boarding House and talked of staying at Waiatarua. The name was approved in 1967 by the NZ Geographic Board after a request from the Nihotupu-Waiatarua Residents and Ratepayers.

Waiatarua means “song of two waters”, possibly referring to the ability to see both the wild west coast, and the still, sparkling waters of the Manukau and Waitemata harbours from certain points in the area.

Pakeha settlement of the area began in the 1850s with timber milling. Names of early settlers included Bendall, Theet, Gash, Judson, Lloyd, Parkinson, Isaachsen and Rose Hellaby (*Song of Two Waters: An Early History of Waiatarua, Wade, 1997*).

Initially the area was only accessible by horsemen. With the advent of timber milling, bullock teams travelled through the area and by 1900 a regular coach service had started between Auckland and Piha. This had a staging post at Bush Road.

By 1900, the area was seen as a holiday location. People also came for healing as the high altitude and clean air was prescribed and recommended as good for recovering from tuberculosis, a common disease at the time. Many boarding houses, nursing homes and holiday cottages were built at this time. The most famous of these were:

- Waiatarua Boarding House: this later became the Dutch Kiwi, a famous dine and dance venue
- Nihotupu House: this later became the Back O The Moon nightclub; and
- Irunga Guest House

(*Song of Two Waters: An Early History of Waiatarua, Wade, 1997*).

In the 1920s a store was set up as well as a school. This meant that school children no longer had to make the long trip over muddy roads to the school at Oratia.

In 1966 the volunteer fire brigade was formed and in 1974 the library at the community centre near the corner of West Coast Road and Forest Hill Road was established.

2.2 Cultural Heritage Sites

Cultural heritage sites in the Waiatarua area include:

- Rose Hellaby House, 515 Scenic Drive, West Coast. A weatherboard cottage style house built 1939. Significance attributed to historical, architectural, community and visual values. Category III.

Further sites are detailed in **Appendix J**.

2.3 Development of District Planning

General information is found in section 2.3.2 of the Foothills Background Report 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 Waiatarua area is zoned as Waitakere Ranges, Foothills and Bush Living.

2.4 Community and Physical Infrastructure

There is no Census Area Unit (CAU) that relates specifically to the Waiatarua Area. Waiatarua forms part of both the Otimai CAU, which covers Oratia and Southern Waiatarua, and the Opanuku CAU, which is very large and includes parts of Henderson Valley. For statistics for Waiatarua relating to the Otimai CAU refer to sections below which include information on population, housing, employment, families, ethnic groups and education.

2.4.1 School

Most primary school age children attend Oratia District School. Information on the school and zone is found in 4.2.3. Older students generally attend Green Bay or Henderson High Schools.

2.4.2 Water

The Waiatarua area is served by on-site wastewater systems. Reticulated potable water is supplied in the Bendalls Land/Bush Rd area and the rest of Waiatarua is on water tanks. There is some reticulation of stormwater, mainly for road run off.

2.4.3 Transport

The majority of people in the Waiatarua area have access to a motor vehicle. Of those who go to work most go by car with very low use of public transport (public transport is not very accessible in the area with only 3 buses per day passing through the area from Waiatarua to Henderson). 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.

The bus service from Henderson to Waiatarua via West Coast and Forest Hill Rd (Route 167) has been removed from the schedule due to low patronage and budget constraints. The nearest point at which traffic is monitored regularly is at the junction between Scenic Drive and Shaw Rd where there are on average 1500 traffic movements per day (AADT) and the Piha Rd with around 2250.¹

Footpaths run along the Scenic Drive from Piha Road to Rose Hellaby House. School buses run through the area on the way to Oratia Primary School

2.4.4 Employment and Businesses

A variety of small businesses operate in the area. The most common businesses or industries in the Waiatarua are:

- Building/building related; and
- Garden related activities (gardening, flowers, landscape design, nurseries).

Elevation Café and Restaurant and Waitakere Estate, a boutique hotel, are both on Scenic Drive in Waiatarua.

A full list of businesses is found in **Appendix S**.

2.4.5 Social Infrastructure

Social infrastructure services available in the Waiatarua area include a community hall, community library and fire station. Two early childhood facilities are available including the Waiatarua playcentre. Other services include the Otimai Girl Guide camp which can be hired for conferences, riding facilities, drama club, table tennis facilities and a softball club. More information is found in **Appendix S**.

2.4.6 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 Waiatarua area including:

- Waiatarua walkers
- Cycling groups
- Waiatarua Volunteer Fire brigade
- Waiatarua playcentre
- Glen Eden runners and New Lynn runners
- Waiatarua table tennis club
- Waiatarua Performing Arts Society

¹ AADT – Annual Average Daily Traffic count – an annualised daily traffic measure, usually calculated from ‘short count’ data collection (actual measurement is total annual traffic on a road for a year, divided by 365 days).

2.4.7 Reserves and Parks

Waitakere City Council manages a number of reserves and parks in the Waiatarua area while land close to the Scenic Drive is managed by the Auckland Regional Council as part of the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park. The closest 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: A historic homestead with period gardens which has panoramic views over the foothills and city;
- 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 has 155,000 visits per year;
- Fairy Falls: Tramping through mature native forest to the Fairy Falls and
- Spragg Bush: A number of easy bush loop-walk destinations with a carpark and a historic cemetery.

More information on these activity nodes can be found in section 55 of the Regional Parks Management Plan.

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

- Driving Reserve (local Green Network bush reserve)
- Mountain Reserve (local Green Network bush reserve)
- Waiatarua Reserve (local community facility)
- Tawari Reserve (local Green Network bush reserve)
- Taumata Scenic Reserve (local Green Network bush reserve)
- Bendalls Esplanade Reserve
- Pareira Esplanade
- Taumata Scenic Reserve
- Bendalls Esplanade Reserve
- Douglas Scenic Reserve (local Green Network bush reserve)
- Raroa Park Reserve (local Green Network bush reserve)
- Bush Rd Reserve (local Green Network bush reserve)

2.4.8 Subdivision and Development

Figure 5 shows the subdivision potential for the Oratia and Waiatarua area. There is limited potential in Waiatarua, mainly in the Forest Hill Rd area around Rimu and Bush Roads and at the western end of Opanuku Rd.

Subdivision controls for the zones found in the Waiatarua area are set out in full in the Subdivision Rules Chapter of the District Plan, but a brief summary² is included below:

² Subdivision is a complex process. As with any transaction involving land or property, obtain competent independent professional advice before proceeding. The table is only a summary of the general provisions applying to all subdivisions, and the detailed provisions for each zone in the District Plan, all of which must be met prior to subdivision being granted.

Human Environment	Lowest consent category	Minimum Site Size (after subdivision)	Conditional upon
Bush Living ³	Discretionary	(i) 4000m ² average (2000m ² minimum), or (ii) 8000m ² , or (iii) 4Ha	Building platform able to be provided in General or Restoration Natural Area no more than one new site, and Building Platform able to be provided in Managed Natural Area In all other situations provided no development in Protected, Coastal or Riparian Margins Natural Areas
Waitakere Ranges	Discretionary	4Ha average (2Ha minimum)	No roads created, and no development in Protected, Coastal or Riparian Margins Natural Areas
Foothills	Controlled Limited Discretionary	4Ha, or In accordance with an approved structure plan	Meeting the protection and enhancement planting and minimum site requirements of the Structure Plan

Rules for permitted activities in the Foothills, Bush Living and Waitakere Ranges environments include:

Bush living

- **Minor household units:** One per site permitted where site is minimum of 1,500m²
- **Non-residential activities:** Home occupations are permitted subject to certain requirements
- **Building coverage:** Greater of 10% of site area or 150m² with a maximum of 300m²

Waitakere Ranges

- **Minor household units:** One per site permitted where site is minimum of 1,500m²
- **Non-residential activities:** Home occupations are permitted subject to certain requirements
- **Building coverage:** Lesser of 15% of net site area or 300m²

Foothills

- **Minor household units:** One per site
- **Non-residential activities:** Home occupations are permitted subject to certain requirements
- **Building coverage:** Greater of 300m² or 1% of net site area

Native vegetation alteration

- Waitatarua includes General, Managed and Protected natural environments, each environment having its own rules regarding vegetation clearance rules. Generally speaking it is a permitted activity to prune native vegetation and to clear vegetation listed in the Removable Vegetation Appendix and the Environmentally Damaging Plants Appendix of the District Plan.

³ Note that different provisions apply in the Bush Living and Waitakere Ranges Human Environments falling within the Titirangi/Laingholm Subdivision Areas (outside of the Foothills) – refer Subdivision Rule 10A: Titirangi-Laingholm

3. Ecological Features

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

3.1 Flora and Fauna

The *Ecology of Waitakere's Rural Areas Report* (Kingett Mitchell Ltd, 2007) does not define Waiatarua as a *specific* ecological unit as part of the study. The Waiatarua area encompasses the forested, upper reaches of the Oratia Stream catchment and includes several streams including Potter Stream, Bendall Stream and Cantys Stream.

Topography is rolling to steep and contains numerous (smaller) watercourses. Vegetation associations include dense kanuka and secondary kauri-podocarp-broadleaf forest. Kauri, kanuka, tanekaha, totara and rewarewa predominate in the drier upper slopes and ridges. Waiatarua on the whole contains forested areas that are intact and subject to less past and present disturbance, apart from localised urbanism which generally comprises ribbon developments along the road. Key restoration areas include weed control and restoration in bush around existing residential areas in Waiatarua. Active management of weeds and pests around private properties would assist in maintaining and enhancing the condition and long-term viability of natural areas

Several small Council-owned reserves are present within the local area, including Rimu Esplanade, Ruru, Douglas, Bendall and Raroa Reserves.

The Waitakere City Biodiversity Monitoring Programme which covers 27 sites across the city includes information on the Douglas Scenic Reserve. Douglas Reserve is mamaku-mixed broadleaf-kauri forest habitat with vegetation diversity is high and all the indicator bird species are present. Tui and kereru were abundant at the site, taking advantage of the flowering rewarewa and kowhai.

The forest surrounding Opanuku-Fairy Falls catchment headwaters has been identified as one of only three long-tailed bat day-roosting areas in the Waitakere Foothills.

Waiatarua is home to RAP #20 (identified as a Recommended Area for Protection under the Protected Natural Areas Programme) Bendalls Bluff. Bendalls Bluff is a rocky volcanic hill with diverse vegetation cover: kowhai-kanuka scrub and shrubland on the bluff face and secondary podocarp forest.

3.2 Waiatarua Streams

The Opanuku Stream flows from the Waitakere Ranges to the Henderson Creek. Along the way it is joined by feeder streams. Streams in the Upper Opanuku area include:

- Yates Gully
- Todd Gully
- Driving Stream
- Stoney Creek
- Fairy Falls
- Parekura Stream

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.

Potters Stream adjacent to the boundary (between Oratia and Waiatarua) was monitored as part of the Project Twin Streams Catchment Monitoring Sediment Quality Monitoring 2005-2006. Potters Stream is characterised as an unmodified bush catchment (72 ha with 3% being impervious surfaces), with diverse hydrological conditions with natural pools, runs & riffles containing a good environment for aquatic life. It has diverse inorganic sediment and high instream habitat quality. Habitat conditions within the Potters Stream had not changed since sampling in 2003/2004. Complete stream shade is afforded at this site by native species. Riparian vegetation decreased in quality and abundance (generally) further downstream from forested through to peri-urban through to urban

The Waiatarua area is part of the Opanuku Stream Catchment for Project Twin Streams (PTS). 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

For further information on the ecology of the Waiatarua area see **Appendix T**.

4. Landscape and Landform Features

See section 3.2 of the Foothills Background Report for general information on landscape and landform 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 Opanuku Stream corridor) are denoted as Outstanding Landscapes (quality rating of 6 and 7). The Waiatarua area around the junction of Forest Hill Rd with Scenic Drive, including Tui Crescent, Bush Rd and Rimu Rd settlements are not included within the area denoted Outstanding Landscapes.

Proposed Plan Change 8 changes provide a description of the area as Outstanding Natural Landscape (again, excluding the area around the Forest Hill/Scenic Drive junction). The Waitakere Ranges (Landscape Unit 73) are described as "*coastal and inland ranges landforms with largely intact remnant indigenous vegetation reinforcing topography*".

In the Waiatarua area the upper catchment is relatively steep and bush clad, dissected by steep gullies while the middle catchment has rolling ridgelines and valleys. Much of the ridgeline in Waiatarua along Scenic Drive is designated sensitive ridgeline in the Waitakere District Plan. The lower catchment is more undulating topography. In the report *Waitakere Ranges Landscape Study: Stage 1* (Absolum, 2004 and attached as **Appendix L**), the Waiatarua 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 characteristic of the Core Ranges however development within the bush clad slopes is more extensive than in the Core Ranges. In Waiatarua this includes moderate to gentle rolling landform, around Driving Stream and Stoney Creek valleys. Native forest on higher slopes extends down stream sides giving way to pasture. There are small enclaves on houses. The landscape is rolling pastoral land with a strong bush backdrop.

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

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

- In upper catchment: Inappropriate residential development, particularly where prominent landforms, can be visually intrusive.

The report also identifies possible activities that may be appropriate in parts of the Waiatarua area depending on the landscapes ability to absorb certain forms of development. These include retirement and visitor activities.

5. Figures

Figure 5: Subdivision Potential for existing lots in the Foothills area

Figure 32: Map of the Waiatarua Area

6. Appendices

- APPENDIX C: Planning Maps from Waitemata District Scheme 1973**
- APPENDIX D: Planning Maps from the Waitemata City District Plan 1984**
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