

Rural Area Design Guide

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1.0 Introduction

Intention of the Design Guide

This Design Guide applies to subdivisions and residential buildings and associated residential accessory buildings in the Rural Area. Its intention is to provide for sustainable rural living while enhancing and protecting rural character and amenity.

It is intended that subdivisions and residential buildings will be:

- sensitive to the unique rural landscapes of Wellington;
- environmentally sustainable;
- attractive places to live; and
- efficiently integrated into the infrastructure of services.

When planning new development the amenity of both existing residents as well as newcomers must be considered. Privacy, shelter, access to open space, the maintenance of a quiet environment, and security need to be thought about to ensure the quality of lifestyle is sustained for existing residents while offering the same for newcomers.

Natural and Rural Character

Any new development should seek to endorse and enhance the existing natural and rural character. In rural areas there is a blending of the functional and the aesthetic, the natural and the cultural. Rural environments are most valued for their natural and open pastoral character and it is this character which new development can threaten. The challenge for developers is to provide for a balance, to ensure that development does not overwhelm the natural and rural character with geometric and fragmenting patterns and prominent built structures.

Most of Wellington's rural landscapes have been subject to varying degrees of human modification. Rural settings commonly offer a mix of managed and cultivated landscapes and wild natural areas. Individual preferences vary; some people prefer more ordered settings while others enjoy unstructured wild places.

The appendices provide an overview of the character and qualities of rural landscapes around Wellington. They include the perceptions of the communities who live in these places, what they appreciate and what they regard as important.

The Design Guide and the District Plan

This Design Guide provides the objectives and criteria against which resource consent applications for subdivision and residential buildings provided for as discretionary activities in the District Plan rules will be assessed. Applicants seeking resource consent approvals will be required to demonstrate that the requirements of the Design Guide have been satisfied when formulating their proposal. As such the Design Guide is an important reference document.



Valued rural character

Proposals must recognize and respect the existing character and qualities of a site as well as demonstrate a commitment to developing quality rural residential living environments.

No precise formula exists for the skilful planning and design of rural development so the Guideline allows considerable flexibility in terms of detailed design. It outlines clear design principles that new developments are expected to observe, but these should not be considered as rigid rules. The illustrations in the Guide are intended to support the text by explaining principles. They are not intended to represent actual design solutions.

How to use this Design Guide

The Design Guide is formatted to reflect the steps an applicant should follow. These include:

1. Develop an understanding of the general character and qualities of the area and what the local people care about. The area specific character analysis in the appendices provides a starting point for this.
2. Identify the attributes of the site and its immediate environs that need to be recognized and integrated into your design through the development of a site analysis plan. Section 2.0 of the Guide outlines the scope and extent of the required site analysis. With the benefit of a site analysis plan showing critical features and patterns it will be possible to explore options for boundary locations, access ways and locating buildings.
3. With reference to the appropriate sections of this guideline, consider the treatment of boundaries, access ways and building sites. Most of the guideline will be relevant whether you are planning a whole subdivision or simply the layout of a section or lot.
4. When proposing a new residential building or extension, consider the scale and design of buildings and ancillary structures in relation to the objectives and guidelines.
5. Document the decisions made and reasons for these. This will support the proposed site plan and can be evidence of matters raised by the design guide having been addressed in your resource consent application.

Consultation

While formulating the proposal be mindful of the potential adverse impacts on adjacent properties. In order to identify opportunities for coordination and help identify and resolve potential conflicts it is worthwhile discussing aspirations and plans with adjoining neighbours.

It is also recommended that before you finalise your proposal you arrange to discuss the general concept with council officers. A meeting can be arranged by contacting the Urban Strategy Group at Wellington City Council. This can help the resource consent process to run more smoothly.

2.0 Site Analysis Requirement

Recognising local and site character

When planning development in rural areas the important characteristics of the site and locality must be identified. An area-specific character analysis is provided in the appendix and the appropriate section should be used to inform the development of your site. In addition, recognising that each site will have special local characteristics, a site analysis plan will be required. This must show the defining attributes and features of the site and its immediate surroundings including:

- Contours sufficient to understand general landform and to assess the visibility of features from key viewing points.
- Roads, public reserves and walkways
- Location and general type of planting; trees, shelterbelts, hedges, native and plantation vegetation
- Open and treeless or pasture areas
- Waterways, wetlands and their associated vegetation
- Existing buildings (identifying their type)
- Fence lines and boundaries
- Heritage sites and any other places, elements or structures of historic or cultural significance.
- Major services eg major power pylons and lines



Indicative Site Analysis Plan

Aerial photographs with an overlay of contour lines are ideal for developing an understanding of the site and identifying key features. These can be obtained from Wellington City Council.

Additional information may be required. Wellington City Council, Greater Wellington and the Department of Conservation are all sources of useful information and advice.

Extent and Scale of Site Analysis Plan

The site analysis must show the development site in its local landscape context. The landscape around all sides of the site must be shown. The amount of adjoining area shown on each side of the site should be not less than the width of the site itself. (The site at the centre of the plan will occupy around 1/9 the total drawing area.)

Plans must be at a scale sufficient to show the defining characteristics of the site in its context.

- Site analysis for a very large development might be at a scale of 1:2000, 1:5000 or even 1:10,000, whereas a small development might be drawn at 1:500 or 1:1000
- A series of plans at varying scales might be necessary. Where a development site is very large, a small scale (for example 1:10,000) may be used to show wider landscape patterns, and a second drawing of a larger scale provided to show defining patterns on and immediately around the site.



Extent of Site Analysis

3.0 Natural Features, Ecosystems and Habitats

Analysis

The visual coherence of the landscape is important. Views of long stretches of natural coastline and open ridges and spurs can be highly valued, especially when built structures are minimal and their impact is minor. Natural patterns of woody vegetation and pasture establish character, provide coherence and add interest.

Prominent natural landforms

Prominent landforms contribute to local character. Landforms unique to Wellington and of particular interest and concern include the coastal escarpment and terraces, and all main hilltops, ridges and spurs.

The coastal environment

The coastal environment has a wild and expansive character. Pasture is often interspersed with scrub and along some parts of the coast a reversion to an indigenous plant cover is occurring. Indigenous regrowth is most prolific on steep southern faces. Settlement is generally tightly contained and the wild and natural landscape dominates farming infrastructure.

Wetlands and waterways

The wetlands and waterways of rural Wellington are frequently associated with access and settlement. Wetlands and waterways are of significance to wildlife as well as to human welfare. Water as a feature is very important to character and amenity.

Ecosystems and Habitats

Features of ecological value include wetlands, streams, native vegetation, and groups of mature exotic trees. Indigenous vegetation is particularly important as native birds often return with the re-establishment of indigenous cover and this contributes to enhanced biodiversity. Waterways and their associated vegetation contribute to a visual and ecological connectedness and coherence. Rebuilding wildlife corridors is particularly important as a means of re-establishing habitats. An extended framework of habitat is more sustainable than isolated pockets.



Landscape elements as defining features



Prominent ridges



Vegetation with habitat potential

Objectives

- 01** To protect and enhance the distinctive natural character of prominent landforms, the coastal environment, wetlands, streams and their margins.
- 02** To provide for the long term sustainability of ecosystems and habitats by recognising and providing for natural processes.

Guidelines

- G1** Maintain streams, wetlands, and associated vegetation.
- G2** Ensure that the quality and quantity of water associated with streams and wetlands will be unchanged by development.
- G3** Protect and enhance waterways and drifts of vegetation running through the development site, particularly those making connections with the surrounding landscape.
- G4** Protect significant indigenous vegetation and habitat. This may require fences and ongoing weed and pest control.
- G5** Link existing habitats and vegetation with additional planting.
- G6** Minimise the intrusion of 'cultural' elements into very natural/wilderness environments
- G7** Protect any features of geological interest such as terraces, escarpments, and rock outcrops.
- G8** Minimise any earthworks disturbance to the natural ground form.

4.0 Planting

Analysis

Existing exotic trees and shrubs are extremely important to the character of settled rural areas in Wellington. Some conifer plantings are of historic interest, macrocarpa in particular. Groups of old macrocarpa scattered through a development confer a cultural coherence and are reminders of the area's history of settlement. Following the removal of the indigenous vegetation cover early settlers soon discovered that conifers were essential as a first step in providing shelter and making an area habitable. People moving into elevated and exposed landscapes today observe the same practices.

New planting can enhance natural character while fulfilling the functional needs of shade and shelter. It may also mitigate any adverse effects of structures. Planting can provide buffers where there are conflicts between uses.

Maintaining or extending existing patterns of vegetation in new subdivisions is important for visual integration and coherence. Sensibly designed planting which traverses public and private spaces can greatly assist in the future visual integration of buildings and structures. Hedges are a common element and rows and groups of trees are often planted for functional purposes, typically defining lot or paddock boundaries. Species diversity is limited except in areas of settlement, and in the private gardens around houses.

Carefully placed planting along roads and access-ways provides shade, shelter and privacy. Memorable landscaping and open space frameworks can contribute to a sense of community identity and increase real estate values.

Planting for shelter and privacy

Traditional farm homesteads were effectively buffered from the extreme winds of open pastoral landscapes by intensive shelter planting to create attractive and livable enclaves. Similar planting can also create spaces and provide buffering and privacy for future infill. Although vegetation is not a particularly effective noise barrier it does serve to screen out activities in a psychological sense. Solid planting can also screen out potentially intrusive rural activities - movement, noise, dust, and chemical spray drift.



Extended pattern of tree planting

Objectives

O1 To reinforce, extend, and complement established patterns of planting.

O2 To provide shelter, privacy, and screening to enhance living environments and minimise the adverse visual impacts of structures as viewed from neighbours houses and public roads.

Guidelines

- G1** Use species and planting combinations characteristic of the local area. Take cues from existing species and patterns of vegetation associated with buildings, access-ways, hilltops, ridges and spurs.
- G2** Retain significant trees and hedges when they are part of a defining pattern within the local landscape, such as a boundary shelter belt. Maintain the continuity of existing patterns of planting extending beyond the boundaries of the development site.
- G3** Encourage the natural regeneration of natives and plant natives where this is consistent with the established rural character.
- G4** Consider extending existing bush areas or groups of trees to provide a setting for new buildings and help to integrate new buildings into the landscape.
- G5** Avoid placing woodlots on prominent ridges and spurs, and ensure their edges reflect natural patterns and contours and are softened and integrated into the surrounding landscape. Edges could be softened by planting at a variable density, planting groups of different species, or by encouraging the natural regeneration of natives.
- G6** Where contour modification is necessary for building platforms and access roads use planting to soften visual impacts.
- G7** Use planting around building sites to screen and soften structures and to create shelter and private space. Take cues from established plantings in the area.

5.0 Rural Heritage

Analysis

Retaining and enhancing the heritage features of a site can lend character and interest while helping to integrate the development into the wider landscape. Respecting the contribution of earlier occupants efforts can provide important cues to sensible connections, planting and building location.

Existing features such as old shelter-belts, indigenous remnants, and even old buildings should be kept if possible to provide a sense of well established rural character and connectedness.

The heritage features of an area include places, pathways and structures of spiritual and historic significance to Maori, Europeans, or both.

Old agricultural buildings and structures – woolsheds and other farm sheds, and elements such as loading races and stock pens - are significant reminders of traditional rural activity. They make historical links to activities often long past, and are important determinants of rural character.



Woolshed establishes rural character



Loading race

Objectives

O1 To protect important cultural and heritage features including older trees, houses, and other rural buildings.

Guidelines

G1 Retain any historic roads, walkways, paths and tracks and ensure the main landscape features that establish their setting are maintained or enhanced.

G2 Retain buildings and structures with historic relevance or character including, for example, old woolsheds and features such as loading ramps and stockyards.

G3 Explore the adaptive reuse of rural buildings that characterise the agricultural use and the history of the area.

6.0 Access

Analysis

Travel on rural roads is an important part of the rural experience, for those who live in rural areas as well as for visitors. Safe access ways for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders needs to be provided. A network of walkways and cycle ways connecting amenities such as schools and public open space may also fulfill a wider recreational purpose.

Roads and access ways

Roads have significant impacts on natural character and amenity. Roads can have major visual as well as ecological impacts and vehicle noise can be intrusive.

Narrow roads that follow the contour, involve a minimum of cut and fill, and have rough grass verges with an absence of shoulders sit most comfortably in a rural setting. Wide verges, formed footpaths and kerbing and channeling are out of character in such settings.

Numerous side roads and property entrances can be difficult to see, dangerous and distracting. New entrances off main roads should be minimised, with one access-way being provided to serve groups of buildings where possible.

Walkways and cycle ways

Formal walkways, cycle ways, and possibly bridle paths need to be considered, particularly in relation to larger subdivisions. Easy and safe access in attractive settings is one of the traditional expectations of rural areas. New development also allows the possibility of adding to the range of characteristic rural recreational opportunities already existing. Access to natural areas along lake and stream edges and onto hills and ridges can add to the amenities for residents as well as expanding recreational networks for visitors.



Typical rural road

Objectives

- O1** To ensure that new development is accessible and the road network provides for efficient, convenient, and safe access.
- O2** To ensure that roads and access-ways are designed to minimise visual intrusion and that their construction is of a rural character.
- O3** To enhance the recreational potential of the road and access way system

Guidelines

- G1** Ensure that new roads and access ways are in character with rural areas.

- Keep public roads and private access ways at a rural or farm scale.
- Discharge road runoff onto open ground or into swales and where possible avoid curb and channel, hardened surfaces, and pipes.

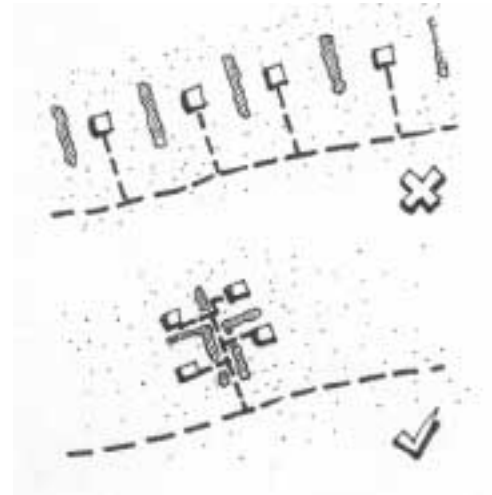
G2 Align roads and access ways to follow contours and respect landforms in order to avoid unnatural patterns in the landscape and to minimize earthworks and their visual impacts.

G3 Ensure that planting adjacent to roads and access ways adds to the amenity value without creating safety hazards.

G4 Where possible use shared access ways to minimize the adverse visual effect of multiple driveways.

G5 Provide public roads through new subdivisions where important public amenities need to be linked.

G6 Provide for safe walking, cycling and horse riding along the verges of any new roads that are created.



Minimising the effect of multiple accessways

7.0 Boundary Location and Treatment

Analysis

It is often the fragmentation of the landscape rather than the addition of buildings that detracts from rural character and amenity. Large areas of pasture with simple groups of conifers or naturally patterned mixtures of grass and reverting scrub are, when subdivided, often fragmented into geometric shapes reinforced by rows of trees. New development must be designed to mitigate this tendency to fragmentation. Access ways and legal boundaries need to be located to minimize the impacts of fragmentation and their treatment should ensure that the traditional patterns and precedents of the wider rural landscape are retained.



Established pattern of shelter belts

Varying lot sizes and locating buildings to maintain openness

In areas such as Makara and Ohariu Valleys, where only one new lot can be subdivided from a large lot, a combination of one large lot and one small lot can help to maintain the openness and coherence of the rural landscape. In conjunction with this a sense of openness can be retained by locating buildings with mature trees or where they are absorbed into the landform; in natural hollows for example. In this way new buildings are contained rather than being seen to take over and dominate open areas.

In areas on the urban fringe, where the District Plan allows subdivision into smaller allotments, a combination of a few very large lots complementing many small lots can help to maintain the openness and coherence of the rural landscape. The benefits of this approach are increased by co-locating dwellings in carefully screened groups. Vegetation screens reduce the visual impact of new dwellings and help to achieve privacy between buildings.

Objective

O1 To establish boundaries and lot configurations that are in keeping with both the natural features and the traditional patterns of the rural landscape.

Guidelines

G1 Retain the scale, pattern, and treatment of enclosure or openness occurring within the surrounding rural landscape.

Consider:

- Varying lot sizes to fit the existing scale and pattern of enclosure; and
- Combining a limited number of very large lots with a greater number of small lots to reduce the adverse effects of boundary definition and dispersed buildings and ancillary structures. This strategy is particularly relevant where it is desirable to retain an existing openness,

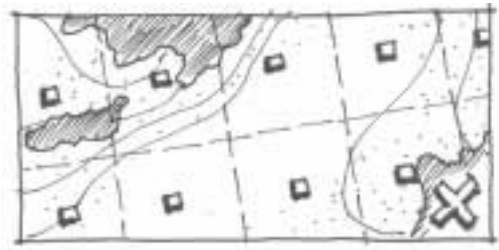
such as over extensive pasture areas.

G2 Observe the pattern and treatment of existing boundaries where these reflect traditional and valued practices.

Consider:

- Retaining traditional boundary markers such as old shelter belts and groups of exotic trees.
- Maintaining a similar orientation, alignment, and style of fences and planting to that already existing.
- Continuing the alignment and character of planting across lot boundaries to achieve visual coherence.
- Avoiding patchy and fragmented boundary planting on adjoining lots.

G3 Consider using bulk planting and woodlots to shape subdivisions and ensure their integration within the wider landscape, simultaneously creating house sites with privacy and shelter.



Combining lots of different sizes to minimize effect on rural character and outlook

8.0 Locating Buildings

Analysis

Buildings should be located to maximise the benefits of the rural setting while minimising their impact on that setting for others. Ideally this means siting buildings away from the sight and sound of the road, and sheltered from the wind.

Established rural buildings are generally settled into the landscape, by time or by design, with plantings that shelter and embrace them. New buildings need not be hidden but when visible they should be low profile and nestled into, rather than dominating, the site.

Reference to the traditional location of buildings in rural areas suggests that:

- Buildings are typically set back from roads and hidden from view by trees.
- Rural buildings are often set in trees or against hedges. This means that even if located on a low ridge it is the vegetation which is seen on the skyline rather than the geometric form of the building.
- Buildings are usually located up off the flats, which can be frosty and flood prone, and set on the lower slopes of hills, on river terraces, or on natural plateaus. In a setting of mature trees they are not generally visible.
- Buildings are generally grouped. With the exception of isolated barns, farm buildings tend to be clustered around the homestead.

Dispersed development

In the past buildings in rural areas have been either dispersed on large lots, located at the functional centre of a farm as a group, or less commonly, grouped around community amenities to create a 'village' setting. Where lots are smaller isolation is difficult to achieve, and as buildings become more common they begin to increase in significance and change the open, undeveloped character of the rural landscape. Dispersal of new buildings across the rural landscape at relatively frequent and regular intervals will noticeably and irrevocably change the character of the landscape from rural to suburban.

Careful development planning which uses natural landscape features such as topography and vegetation to create screening may in some circumstances allow a sense of isolation and openness to be retained, even when buildings are relatively common and dispersed across the landscape. The challenge is to ensure that signs of habitation are not visually prominent.

Grouping buildings

The characteristic and traditional pattern of aggregated buildings and intensive mixed plantings, set in relatively simple and undivided areas of open pasture, can be maintained by generally grouping new buildings or locating these in proximity to existing buildings. Features of the site such as topography and existing planting can be used as a basis for co-locating buildings in a way that privacy is maintained. Co-location may also enable shared access-ways to be considered, which would reduce the intrusion of multiple entrances along a rural road.



Rural buildings in the landscape



Traditional patterns of building aggregation

Minimising the visual effects of earthworks

The location of potential building platforms should be considered early on in the site planning stage, and this is particularly important for steeply sloping sites. Locations that require major and highly visible earthworks for access and building platforms should be avoided.

Open space and visual privacy.

Choosing a rural lifestyle is usually about the prospect of space and privacy. Views out from a sheltered and private enclave onto areas of un-fragmented open space, bush or pasture are valued. Considering the scale and demarcation of spaces is important not only in terms of what the neighbours see, and don't see, but also in maintaining the openness that is characteristic of rural areas. This means keeping buildings back from the road, grouping buildings to avoid covering the landscape with structures, and using established vegetation as well as natural bumps and hollows to give visual separation and screening. The planting of solid groups and buffers of vegetation may be required to create real privacy. Any subdivision of open space should be moderated in order to maintain a sense of rural expansiveness.

Acoustic Privacy

Acoustic privacy for the dwelling might be achieved by physical separation from other dwellings or the detailed design of the dwelling, its ancillary buildings and surrounding landscape features. The primary consideration is that people in or immediately adjacent to dwellings experience a sense of acoustic privacy, and the noise associated with their typical day to day activities does not effect their neighbours.

Maximising separation distances and dispersing new dwellings across a development site without detracting from rural character may be possible when lots are large and topography or other landscape features can be used to screen new buildings from view. Wide dispersal is usually only possible however when the development intensity is very low. Most sites in a rural environment do however offer the opportunity for separation distances that are many times in excess of those possible in urban situations.

When development is relatively intensive the scattering of dwellings for acoustic reasons is likely to compromise the rural character. In these circumstances detailed design measures such as the detailed placement and orientation of living spaces, acoustic barriers and screening elements, should be considered in order to enable some grouping of buildings.

Objectives

- O1** To reinforce valued characteristic patterns of building placement.
- O2** To minimise the visual impact of buildings in an open rural environment.
- O3** To maintain the open, un-built character of important hilltops, ridgelines and spurs.



Buildings placed to minimise impacts

O4 To ensure that development achieves the sense of space and privacy characteristic of rural areas.

O5 To minimise ground disturbance in site development and access provisions.

O6 To achieve reasonable acoustic privacy for dwellings.

O7 To optimise energy efficiency in the placement of buildings on site



Building location relative to ridgelines

Guidelines

G1 Locate buildings to constrain their visual impacts using one or more of the following methods:

- Keep buildings off prominent hills, spurs and ridges, especially where they are seen against the sky.
- Use existing vegetation to screen, shelter, and convey a sense of maturity.
- Locate buildings to use valleys and ridges to screen them from each other and the road.
- Generally set buildings back from main roads and avoid manicured garden frontages along road verges.
- Group buildings to reflect traditional patterns and to maintain unobstructed openness on other parts of the development site.



Locating buildings to maintain characteristic openness

G2 Plan for enclosure and shelter to provide privacy and shelter for the house site while maintaining long views out and the sense of rural open space.

G3 When identifying house sites consider their relationship with those on adjoining lots.

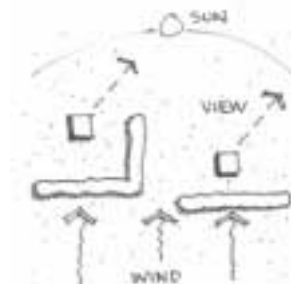
G4 Locate buildings to minimise the visual impacts of any earthworks associated with access and building platforms.



Grouping buildings

G5 Where acoustic privacy is likely to be of concern, consider:

- The use of topographical features, solid walls, ancillary buildings or a combination of these to provide acoustic screening. Such acoustic barriers will be most effective close to the source or the receiver of noise.
- Locating and orientating outdoor spaces directly associated with the living areas of dwellings away from similar areas on adjoining sites.
- Creating acoustic enclosures around stationary mechanical equipment.
- In combination with the above measures, using intensive planting to screen the source of noise and create the impression of acoustic privacy.



Buildings screened for privacy and orientated for sun, views and a sense of openness

G6 Orientate main living and associated outdoor spaces to the sun and provide shelter from prevailing winds.

9.0 Design of Buildings and Structures

Analysis

The sense of being rural derives as much from the character of the cultural dimension as it does from the natural. If buildings in prominent locations are large and have an overt urban or suburban residential appearance then the rural character will be lost, regardless of the 'naturalness' of the setting.

Some of the more important features of the character of rural buildings and structures include:

- Houses are generally single storey of a modest scale, of simple form, and are often timber framed and clad.
- Ancillary structures such as fences and gateways, sheds and barns are typically simple and visually restrained.
- Simple post, wire and batten fences are most commonly used.

Objective

O1 To ensure that new buildings and structures are in keeping with and do not visually dominate the natural and rural character.

Guidelines

G1 Maintain the characteristic modest scale of rural buildings and ancillary structures.

G2 Where new buildings are in prominent locations, use visually recessive finishes and colours.

G3 Choose roofs that are dark and absorb rather than reflect light.

G4 Use fences and other features at boundaries that are simple and extend characteristic rural patterns

G5 Place services underground where possible, otherwise use simple utilitarian timber poles.



Typical rural 7-wire post and batten fence

10.0 Providing for Change

Analysis

The initial configuration of a subdivision and individual lots must, in any area where future intensification is a possibility, do more than protect rural character and deliver amenity to the first residents. The initial location of access ways, buildings and planting should be planned to ensure that any future intensification can sustain the natural character and amenities for existing and subsequent settlers. For first residents the prospect of future neighbours and a desire to maximize the value of the lot should provide the incentives for judicious planning and design.

Allowance for possible future intensification is critical in city fringe areas where urban expansion is likely over time. At the initial planning stage connections to existing infrastructure should be made and a layout to accommodate future growth or intensification established. The location of dwellings and its associated planting on lots in the initial development will determine the viability of future subdivision options.

Objective

O1 To ensure that access and building location has regard to future intensification where this is possible.

Guidelines

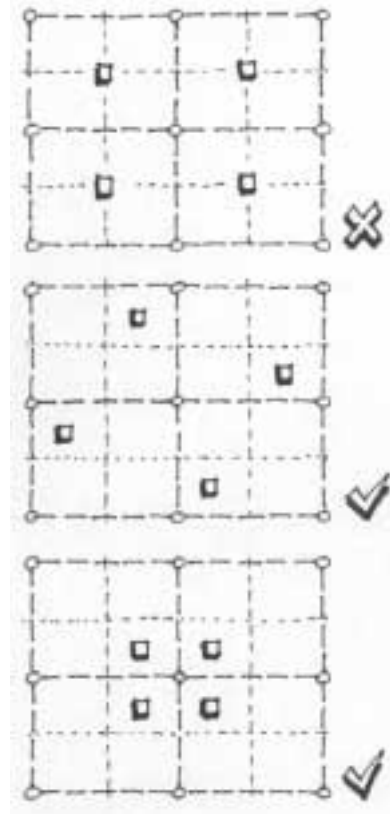
In areas where future intensification is possible:

G1 Consider road layout and plan to allow the possibility of long term future access to infill with provision for future road reserves, allowance for possible widening and extension to areas of possible intensification.

G2 Locate structures and access so that eventual intensification can preserve aspects of rural character and amenity.

G3 Locate major planting to provide screening for additional buildings and their privacy should intensification occur in the future.

G4 Locate initial buildings to allow for future subdivision. This will usually mean placing buildings towards the side or corner of a lot rather than in the centre.



Locating buildings to allow for further subdivision

Appendices: Character Analysis

A1 Overview

This appendix describes Wellington places with a notable 'rural character' and highlights the attributes which make each unique. In recognising a need to understand and respond to the particular visions and concerns of communities the appendix draws on community plans developed by Wellington City Council for each of South Karori, Makara, Ohariu Valley, and Horokiwi. In all Community Plans the need to protect natural character and amenity values is highlighted.

General character

The rural landscapes of Wellington retain a remarkable sense of remoteness and naturalness in spite of their proximity to the city. Roads are few, narrow, and follow the natural contour and pattern of the land. With the exception of the Horokiwi area these corridors follow valleys within which flat land is often limited, and flood prone. Settlement tends to be limited to the road corridors and where more intensive development occurs this is often constrained by steep valley sides.

Heritage

There are a number of sites in the coastal environment of particular significance to Maori. The coast was always an important access way for Maori, and then European. An important historic pathway for Maori traverses the skyline and hills between the coast at Makara and Otari Bush. The Old Coach Road between Ohariu Valley and Johnsonville is also of historic interest. There are gold workings on Terawhiti Station.

Local character

Public roads afford only a limited experience of Wellington's rural landscapes. Beyond the road there are expansive areas of indigenous as well as cultivated nature, high ridges from which spectacular views are possible, and a remote unspoilt coastline. The variation in topography, vegetation cover, landmarks, and views makes every place different and special in its own way. This diversity includes places where the cultural dimension is all but absent and the indigenous character dominates, and places where nature clearly dominates but is of a pastoral and managed character with an overlay of ordered pattern and built structures.

Some landscapes are able to absorb new structures without detracting from the natural character. Places such as South Makara and South Karori Stream which have well established vegetation on undulating and often steep topography are able to accommodate new structures and access ways if these are thoughtfully integrated. In the more open and pastoral landscapes of Ohariu Valley it is more difficult, at least in the short term, to introduce new



Districts and areas of distinctive local character

allotments and buildings without detracting from the rural character. On the broad and exposed Horokiwi hilltops the character has recently changed from being an expansive and pastoral landscape to one where pine shelter belts have compartmented the landscape into tight enclosures. In the Takapu Valley a strong sense of containment at the bottom gives way to an increasing sense of space and openness moving up the valley. At the bottom there is the prospect of absorbing new structures whereas out on the open tops any land-use intensification and additional structures must inevitably alter the character. In the coastal environment any new structure, unless located within existing areas of settlement, will be a conspicuous addition and almost inevitably detract from what is otherwise an extremely wild and natural setting.

Community values

Rural communities identify a diversity of characteristics and experiences to capture their sense of what is important about the rural environment. The predominance of the natural over the cultural with uncluttered open spaces was a central theme. Associated with this communities favour land uses and activities generally associated with the traditional rural environment, pastoralism in particular. There was a clear recognition of the importance of giving primacy to patterns and processes characteristic of rural areas, whether natural and indigenous or pastoral. There was a general unease about new activities which are overly intrusive. Industrial activities threaten peace and quiet, subdivision often brings a proliferation of buildings, and plantation forestry can visually overwhelm a relatively open and diverse landscape with a uniform dark green cloak.

Communities very clearly recognize that how the landscape is used and managed directly affects what they see, feel and experience.

A2 Makara

Summary landscape features

- Although having an overall rural character the Makara Stream environment includes areas of intensive cultural development and activity with a village character.
- At the southern end of the south Makara Valley, where the valley widens, there is space to accommodate an intensification of development.
- Pastoral farming is interspersed with extensive areas of reversion.
- Settlement and cultural structures tend to be located in valley bottoms and along road corridors, clustered where flat land is limited and dispersed where valley bottoms are wider in the South Makara Stream.
- Slopes above the valley bottoms are often steep and difficult to build on with ridges being exposed and inhospitable.
- Although ridge tops are open with rough pasture the



Makara

Qualities valued by the Makara community

- Quiet and peaceful atmosphere.
- The ridges- sense of place.
- The gorse plus bush- personality.
- The roughness- natural, unaffected.
- The views from hill/road- escape.
- Rural and recreational.

- faces are generally steep with reversion occurring; indigenous re-growth is often well advanced on south facing slopes.
- The very broken and difficult topography has meant that access has largely been confined to the bottoms of valleys, along ridgelines, and along the coast.

- Farming/ lifestyle community.
- Rural, bush, sea, horses, ruggedness, escape.
- Rural atmosphere, peaceful outlook and views, unspoilt hills and ridgelines.
- The mixture of landscapes.
- Open space, lack of people and structures.
- Birds, animals, sound of stream running through the valley.
- The coastal escarpments, the beach, the views from the tops of the hill.
- Sense of isolation in contrast to the city.

A3 Ohariu Valley

Summary landscape features

- Open pastoral hill country with a strong sense of order, coherence, security and stability.
- The natural dimension of character is overwhelmingly pastoral rather than indigenous.
- Characterised by largely undivided open space running from valleys, up gentle slopes and out onto rolling tops and ridges. Maintaining uncluttered hills and ridges is fundamental to sustaining the rural character and the sense of space and freedom.
- The location of woody vegetation, almost exclusively exotic, follows a very coherent pattern. Older plantings of pine and macrocarpa reflect functional farming requirements; shelter for stock, buildings and working areas.
- Areas to the north of Makara Beach and west of Ohariu Valley are remote and sparsely populated but intensively managed with developed pasture and few areas of scrub weeds and re-growth.
- Buildings of any significance are generally scattered and folded into valleys so the structured dimension of the landscape is low key.
- With the exception of a few recent buildings designed for views and hence assuming an uncharacteristic detached dominance, buildings are typically understated and unobtrusive.



Ohariu Valley

Qualities valued by the Ohariu Valley community

- Clear skylines.
- Quiet and serene.
- A quiet peaceful place where people can do their own thing without disturbing others.
- A farming area.
- Natural surroundings.
- Low levels of population and development.
- Housing in moderation. (not on show but tastefully hidden behind trees.)
- Rolling hills, peaceful sounds, farming, horses.
- Beautiful, calm, serene, green.
- Horses, sheep, cattle and birds.
- Fresh air, calm, green, ridgelines, hills and mountains, water and streams, trees.
- Mainly open rural landscape uncluttered by large houses on smaller subdivided blocks now common in other areas.

A4 South Karori

Summary landscape features

- Comprises two quite distinctive landscapes: to the north the area including South Karori Road and to the south the more rugged and exposed scrub covered areas of coast and high ridges.

South Karori Road Area

- Narrow winding road shares the valley with the Karori Stream.
- There is a strong sense of enclosure with tall woody vegetation covering the steep valley sides and extending out to the road edge.
- Structures, houses in particular, are generally set back from the road and are not readily visible.
- Often houses are located on terraces or at the confluences of the Karori Stream and side creeks where there is space and sun, but generally



development is dispersed along the stream.

- Presents a strong sense of coherence with modest and generally well-integrated structures set within a mix of exotic conifers, groups of ornamental trees and shrubs, and healthy indigenous vegetation, especially on the shaded faces.

A5 Horokiwi

Summary landscape features

- High and exposed, but less rugged than the coastal landscapes of the south
- The extensive broad ridges and spurs are readily accessible and for the most part covered in pasture.
- Farm buildings and trees are located where the topography affords much needed shelter.
- Vegetation associated with steep areas and streams gives emphasis to natural patterns and edges.
- Trees are generally few in the agricultural landscape and limited to isolated groups of pines and macrocarpa
- In more recently subdivided areas there are small scale enclosures of radiata pine. Where these enclosures sit on spurs off the main ridge they are absorbed within the larger landscape and views from ridges extend across and beyond them. Where they are associated with main roads however, views are becoming obstructed and the expansive character of the landscape is giving way to enclosure.
- Waterways are well defined and distinctive with scrub weeds and indigenous re-growth filling entrenched gullies.

South Karori

Qualities valued by the South Karori community

- Rugged and mostly undeveloped hills; interesting landforms.
- Views and landscape environment.
- Relatively steep sided valleys (so houses are often close to the stream.)
- Pastoral land, useful land.
- Some original native forest and regenerating bush as well as exotic trees.
- Streams and freshwater springs, uncontrived regenerating bush along the Karori Stream.
- Fresh air, sense of remoteness.
- Low density housing allowing privacy/seclusion, quiet lifestyle.
- A distinctly rural area despite its proximity to Wellington.



Horokiwi

Qualities valued by the Horokiwi community

- Bush/ bird life, harbour views.
- Rural sanctuary, not overly developed.
- Isolation, green space, clean, distance from neighbours, light traffic flows, small and medium-scale farming, no street lighting.
- No-exit road which maintains the un-spoilt character of Horokiwi.
- Wind, wind, wind and horizontal rain. Misty days.
- Country smells, fresh air, animals, the sun, the space, the quiet, the natural topography, the native bush.
- Native birds; Sea breeze; Frogs; Peacocks; Llamas.
- No industrial buzz whatsoever; Quiet, Silence! Lovely.
- Rural; sheep sounds at shearing, wind in trees, tranquil.
- Stormy ridgelines; landscapes and views are important.
- The ridgelines give great views in relation to the Maori and European history of Wellington.
- Subdivision of rural land is the greatest threat.
- Restrictions on pine plantings, height restrictions too.
- Ignorance of historical value means some residents or visitors unwittingly destroy these places.
- Others don't consider places of cultural or historical significance as important as their commercial concerns.

A6 The coastal landscape

Summary landscape features

- The coastal environment, especially Wellington's South Coast, is spectacularly wild and expansive. Pastoral farming has altered the patterns of vegetation but much of the indigenous character remains.
- Obvious cultural patterns and structures are minimal. Settlement is very tightly contained within the few sheltered and accessible bays.
- Such settlement as there is takes shelter in the valleys and shares space with the limited developed pasture, the road and the river.
- There is coherence in the patterns of extensive farming with pasture grasses interspersed with scrub. The low key infrastructure of tracks, fences, and power lines is generally confined to ridges and valley bottoms.
- There are vast areas of wild, remote, and inaccessible country extending from the South Karori Stream around the coast and including Mount Misery, Terawhiti Ridge, Quartz Hill and the coastal escarpments north to Makara Beach.
- In the rugged and windswept landscapes of the south extensive farming has battled with scrub weeds and the return of an indigenous cover.
- Variations in vegetation cover reflect the topography. Vegetation management is extremely difficult and any substantial tree growth tends to be on steep southern faces.
- The coastal environment of the south and south west is particularly inhospitable, with any strong sense of cultural presence constrained to uplifted coastal terraces and the outlets of streams such as the Oteranga.



Typical coastal landscape

Qualities valued by the community

- The sea- rugged plus refreshing.
- Ruggedly beautiful, with coastal views and vistas.
- Makara Beach - windswept pebble beach.
- A spectacular coastline and wild coastal environment that can be bleak and windswept.
- Wind and sea, oyster catchers, seagulls, Kotare (Kingfisher.)

A7 Takapu Valley

Summary landscape features

- A tightly enclosed valley opening out at the top into an expansive open landscape.
- A narrow, winding, fenced road with a very rural character.
- Most of the valley is grazed with small fenced enclosures and groups, rather than rows, of trees.
- There are remnants of indigenous vegetation along the stream and on steeper faces with a southerly aspect.
- The historic pattern of ownership is reflected in traditional farm buildings and their ancillary structures located close to the road.
- Recent buildings tend to be set back from the road and hidden by topographical features or set into vegetation.
- On balance the traditional farmed character remains intact as built structure is either traditional, modest in scale, or is hidden within the landscape.



Takapu Valley

Retaining the existing rural and natural character of Takapu Valley will require that the road is maintained in its present form and that the scale and impact of any new buildings is minimized. The intimate scale of the valley with the stream and the road could very easily be overwhelmed. The existing scale and pattern of enclosure might suggest that additional subdivision could be accommodated but unless great care is taken, the associated addition of buildings and ancillary structures would irreversibly alter the existing character.

A8 City fringe areas

These are areas in transition, on the edges of and sometimes within intensively developed areas. They are diverse in character, often having both the natural qualities of rural landscapes and the cultural elements typical of the urban environments to which they are attached. These areas are a focus for attention because of their potential for intensification and urban development, especially in the northern part of the city. Where sites immediately beyond the city boundary comprise relatively accessible and gently sloping land it is likely that they will be taken into the city and developed over time.

Pressures for intensification are countered by desires to retain the sense of green and open space for adjoining residential areas.

Summary landscape features

- Often on steep country so that even when these sites are located within the city or on its edges the topography has made them difficult to develop.
- Many areas on the edge of the city are highly visible from the developed parts of the city and, as open rural land, are often valued for the sense of connection to nature that they offer those urban dwellers that look out on them.



Typical city fringe area