

## PART 2 – DISTRICT-WIDE MATTERS

### STRATEGIC DIRECTION

#### RLR – Rural Land Resource

##### Introduction

The Resource Management Act requires Council to manage the use, development and protection of natural resources, including the rural land resource, while sustaining the potential of such resources to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations and while safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems.

Land-based primary production (including intensive primary production), underpins the economic, social, and cultural well-being of the Central Hawke's Bay District, and the District's rural land resource is important for sustaining this production. Rural production and processing/manufacturing together accounts for just over half of the District's total GDP and around half of the District's employment (based on Stats NZ 2012 figures). Central Hawke's Bay accounts for approximately 40% of the total pastoral and associated cropping land in the Hawke's Bay Region<sup>1</sup>.

Commented [RM1]: S42.011 Pork Industry - Rural Topic, Key Issue 13

Of note is the significant concentration of highly productive land in the District. Highly productive land in the Central Hawke's Bay District covers 82,881 hectares, and comprises approximately 25% of the District's total land area<sup>2</sup>. The District's highly productive land is centred in and around the Ruataniwha Plains and flat-to-rolling land surrounding the urban areas of Waipukurau, Waipawa and Ōtane.

Highly productive soils provide a high level of flexibility in terms of the types of crops that can be grown, and these qualities enable rapid response to changing technologies or crop types required in the future. Highly productive land in New Zealand is rare, and therefore of very high value for food and crop production. The Ministry for the Environment's 'Our Land 2018' and 'Environment Aotearoa 2019' reports have identified that many of New Zealand's productive areas have already been lost and that there are two key pressures facing highly productive land – being urban expansion and the accompanying loss of New Zealand's most versatile and productive land, and an increase in rural lifestyle developments, particularly on the fringes of urban areas.

The District's highly productive land is therefore a significant resource base for the District, and has been deemed to be of regional, if not national, significance warranting specific recognition in the District Plan for its finite characteristics and high value for primary

<sup>1</sup> 'Review of Central Hawke's Bay District District Plan, District Economic Assessment', Economic Solutions Limited, August 2013.

<sup>2</sup> 'Assessment on the need for a new rural zone for subdivision in the Central Hawke's Bay District – Report for the Central Hawke's Bay District Council', LandVision Limited, 24 January 2018.

production purposes<sup>3</sup>. It is also experiencing increasing pressure from rural lifestyle developments and for urban expansion to cater for projected household growth. If this continues to be left unchecked, fragmentation of this resource will have a cumulative impact, including direct loss of highly productive land for primary production and reverse sensitivity implications, which could collectively compromise its productive potential.

Providing for a range and flexibility of land use activities is important for the future in adding diversity and resilience to the rural economy, thereby providing additional employment and economic opportunities to the community. However, this needs to be consciously balanced against the need to protect and retain the rural land resource, in particular the concentration of highly productive land in the District, alongside the health and availability of water.

The establishment of an overall strategy for sustainable management of the District's rural land resource therefore underpins the strategic direction of this District Plan. For this reason, the District Plan has encompassed the concentration of highly productive land of Central Hawke's Bay centred in and around the Ruataniwha and Takapau Plains and flat-to-rolling land surrounding Waipukurau, Waipawa and Ōtane, within a separate zone – the Rural Production Zone (RPROZ).

At a national level, a National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL) is anticipated to be gazetted and is expected to take effect mid 2021, which will likely require District Plans to:

- identify highly productive land;
- maintain the availability and productive capacity of highly productive land for primary production;
- consider giving greater protection to areas of highly productive land that make a greater contribution to the economy and community; and
- manage rural subdivision to avoid fragmentation and maintain the productive capacity of highly productive land.

It is anticipated that the approach in this District Plan will go a long way towards already giving effect to the likely future requirements of the NPS-HPL.

## Issues

### **RLR-11 Incremental Loss of Highly Productive Land**

#### **Land fragmentation and development that leads to the incremental and irreversible loss of highly productive land for primary production.**

##### Explanation

In New Zealand highly productive land is under pressure from a range of competing uses. In particular, highly productive land is becoming increasingly fragmented, mostly as a result of rural subdivision. Rural subdivision is where a single parcel of rural land is divided into two or

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<sup>3</sup> 'Assessment on the need for a new rural zone for subdivision in the Central Hawke's Bay District – Report for the Central Hawke's Bay District Council', LandVision Limited, 24 January 2018.

more parcels. The resulting smaller land parcels can often prevent the use of land for many types of primary production therefore affecting that particular piece of land's versatility.

There has been a history of ad hoc subdivision of small lifestyle blocks within the Central Hawke's Bay District for many years. Many of these blocks are located on highly productive and versatile land or soils. Although some lifestyle blocks do continue to be productive in terms of agricultural or horticultural product, more often than not they become un-productive and their productive potential is lost forever.

Land fragmentation can result in a loss of versatility and the productive capability of rural land, mostly through:

1. Land use change from primary production to non-primary production (lifestyle development, urban development, unrelated industrial/commercial developments etc).
2. Property values in traditional primary production areas increasing to the point that productive land uses become unprofitable.
3. Productive land uses becoming unprofitable because small lot sizes limit management options.
4. Degradation of soil ecosystem services/functions.
5. New sensitive activities establishing on rural land, with the potential to compromise or constrain the operation of existing lawfully established primary production activities in the vicinity (reverse sensitivity).

Commented [RM2]: S81.034 Hort NZ - Rural Topic, Key Issue 2

The District Plan therefore seeks to limit the amount of fragmentation of the District's highly productive land over time, and manage land use change and development of highly productive land to maintain the productive capacity of this scarce and valuable resource for current and future generations.

## Objectives

- RLR-O1**      **The productive capacity of the District's rural land resource, particularly the District's highly productive land, is maintained.**
- RLR-O2**      **The primary production role and associated amenity of the District's rural land resource is retained, and is not-compromised-byprotected from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.**
- RLR-O3**      **The District's highly productive land is protected from further fragmentation.**
- RLR-O4**      **Residential living and other activities that are unrelated to primary production are directed to locations zoned for those purposes and that are not situated on highly productive land.**

Commented [RM3]: S116.006 Silver Fern Farms - Rural Topic, Key Issue 2

## Policies

- RLR-P1** To identify the highly productive land centred in and around the Ruataniwha and Takapau Plains and surrounding Waipukurau, Waipawa and Ōtane within a specific rural zone – the Rural Production Zone.
- RLR-P2** To avoid unplanned urban expansion onto the District's highly productive land ~~where other feasible options exist~~ **in the Rural Production Zone.**
- RLR-P3** To limit ~~the amount of~~ further fragmentation of the District's rural land resource through limiting lifestyle subdivision **in the General Rural Zone, and particularly in the Rural Production Zone, and directing lifestyle site subdivision primarily to the Rural Lifestyle Zone.**
- RLR-P4** To provide for a wide range of activities to establish, which complement the resources of the rural area, provided that they do not **unduly compromise the primary production role and associated rural character and amenity of the rural land resource, particularly in the Rural Production Zone, recognising that some non-primary production activities have an operational or functional need to locate in a rural area.**
- RLR-P5** To enable primary production and related activities to operate in rural areas in accordance with accepted practices without being compromised by other activities demanding higher levels of amenity.

Commented [RM4]: S116.010 Silver Fern Farms - Rural Topic, Key Issue 2

Commented [RM5]: S116.011 Silver Fern Farms - Rural Topic, Key Issue 2

Commented [RM6]: S79.016 Transpower, S81.042 Hort NZ - Rural Topic, Key Issue 2

## Methods

Methods for implementing the policies:

### RLR-M1 Area-Specific Provisions

The use of zoning to direct activities to appropriate locations:

#### GRUZ – General Rural Zone:

The General Rural Zone encompasses the bulk of the District's rural land. This area is suitable for a wide range of **primary production activities (including intensive primary production and related post-harvest facilities)** to occur, that can require exclusive areas of land and establishes the flexibility for landowners to identify opportunities to innovatively utilise the resources of the area. Controls in this Zone are tailored to provide flexibility for landowners.

Commented [RM7]: S42.014 Pork Industry - Rural Topic, Key Issue 13

Commented [RM8]: S102.021 Te Mata Mushrooms - Rural Topic, Key Issue 15

#### RPROZ – Rural Production Zone:

The Rural Production Zone encompasses the concentration of highly productive land in and around the Ruataniwha and Takapau Plains and Waipukurau, Waipawa and Ōtane.

Standards in this Zone reflect the more intensive nature of primary production activities (including intensive primary production and related post-harvest facilities), the increased interface between different land uses and the proximity of the Zone to the urban centres, and the pressures that this places on the soil resource.

Commented [RM9]: S42.014 Pork Industry - Rural Topic, Key Issue 13

Commented [RM10]: S102.021 Te Mata Mushrooms - Rural Topic, Key Issue 15

#### RLZ – Rural Lifestyle Zone:

This Zone provides the main opportunity for low density residential development in the District, in close proximity to the main urban areas of Waipukurau and Waipawa.

#### **RLR-M2 Proposed National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL)**

The NPS-HPL will likely require District Plans to identify highly productive land in their District, and include provisions that maintain the availability and productive capacity of highly productive land for primary production and that manage rural subdivision to avoid fragmentation and maintain the productive capacity of highly productive land.

#### **RLR-M3 Land Information Memorandum**

When requested, people wishing to establish in the rural area-zones will be issued with a Land Information Memorandum advising them that they are establishing in a productive rural environment where amenity standards associated with the normal conduct of farming operations, and related activities such as established rural industry, in the Zone (that is, amenity standards that allow for fluctuating noise, odour and air quality levels resulting from accepted primary production management practices and rural industry activities) will be upheld by the Council. Provided that these activities are carried out within the provisions established by the District Plan or in accordance with a resource consent(s), the effects of the activities on amenity standards will not be considered a nuisance.

Commented [RM11]: S116.014 Silver Fern Farms - Rural Topic, Key Issue 15

### **Principal Reasons**

The principal reasons for adopting the policies and methods:

The traditional pastoral area of the District will continue to be an important component of the District's economy and must be safeguarded – particularly the regionally, if not nationally, significant concentration of highly productive land in and around the Ruataniwha and Takapau Plains and surrounding Waipukurau, Waipawa and Ōtāne (in line with the proposed NPS-HPL).

The subdivision of land will be primarily for the purpose of achieving a more efficient outcome for land based primary production around pastoral, cropping or forestry purposes. There may be the need to subdivide off a surplus residential building or provide for those property owners who may wish to subdivide their house from the farm and retire on the property, but these activities need a level of control. The Plan aims to prevent large numbers of small holdings in the rural environment, particularly on the highly productive land within the Rural Production Zone.

Commented [RM12]: S116.015 Silver Fern Farms - Rural Topic, Key Issue 15

The rural environment provides for a range of activities and farm and associated buildings that are of a scale to meet the needs of the primary production sector [(including intensive primary production)]. There is a limit on the scale of commercial and industrial activities in the rural environment and beyond the floor area standards outlined within the zones these types of activity should be located within the appropriate zones where the effects can be suitably accommodated.

Commented [RM13]: S42.015 Pork Industry - Rural Topic, Key Issue 13

### Anticipated Environmental Results

The environmental results anticipated from the policies and methods:

- RLR-AER1**      **The safeguarding of the District's rural land resource and its life-supporting capacity for current and future generations.**
- RLR-AER2**      **The area of land available for primary production purposes is not reduced by ad hoc and unplanned development.**
- RLR-AER3**      **An attractive and economically sustainable rural environment that provides opportunity for a stable rural population.**
- RLR-AER4**      **Activities in the rural area are primarily primary production and related activitiesA diversity of activity in the rural area.**
- RLR-AER5**      **Maintaining and enhancing rural character and amenity including avoiding reverse sensitivity effects.**

Commented [RM14]: S81.045 Hort NZ - Rural Topic, Key Issue 2