

WAITAKERE RANGES HERITAGE AREA ACT 2008: A GUIDE TO THE HERITAGE FEATURES

The Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008's purpose is the recognition of the national, regional and local significance of the Heritage Area and the protection and enhancement of its **heritage features** for present and future generations.

The **heritage features** are those things that individually or collectively contribute to the significance of the heritage area. The features include ecosystems, landscapes and landforms, the human culture of the Heritage Area both past and present, the Regional Park and the water catchment and supply system.

WHY ARE THE HERITAGE FEATURES IMPORTANT?

The consent authority (Council) that considers your resource consent application is required by the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act ('the Act') to have particular regard to the purpose of the Act and the relevant objectives. Since the objectives relate primarily to the protection of the **heritage features**, it is essential that your application accurately identifies the features within or adjoining the site.

Identification of the **heritage features** is also a crucial element of the Local Area Plans provided for under the Act.

WHAT ARE THE HERITAGE FEATURES?

Section 7 of the Act lists the heritage features which include:

The terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of prominent indigenous character

- (a) ... *terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems of prominent indigenous character that—*
- (i) *include large continuous areas of primary and regenerating lowland and coastal rainforest, wet land, and dune systems with intact ecological sequences:*
 - (ii) *have intrinsic value:*
 - (iii) *provide a diversity of habitats for indigenous flora and fauna:*
 - (iv) *collect, store, and produce high quality water:*
 - (v) *provide opportunities for ecological restoration:*
 - (vi) *are of cultural, scientific, or educational interest:*
 - (vii) *have landscape qualities of regional and national significance:*
 - (viii) *have natural scenic beauty.*

While small areas of unmodified forests remain in the heritage area, most of the forested area is regenerating through natural processes. The area is valuable for its size, for the number of complete ecosystems including sequences of vegetation that extend from the coast to the inland hills, for its beauty and for its intrinsic worth.

Potential impacts of development on these features include a reduction in biodiversity, degradation, fragmentation or loss of habitat, increased numbers of pest animals and pest plants and adverse impacts on the area's ability to regenerate.

Click on the following links to view Auckland Council District Plan (Waitakere Section) maps relating to these features.

<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/districtplanwaitakere/maps/appendices/ix-nativevegn.pdf>

<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/districtplanwaitakere/maps/policy/nativefauna.pdf>

<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/districtplanwaitakere/maps/policy/landelements.pdf>

<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/districtplanwaitakere/maps/policy/landscapes.pdf>

The different classes of natural landforms and landscapes

“the different classes of natural landforms and landscapes within the area that contrast and connect with each other, and which collectively give the area its distinctive character”

The distinctive character of the Heritage Area is in large part due to its striking and varied landforms and landscapes. Landforms are physical features such as ridges and valleys while landscapes are an expanse of scenery that can be seen in a single view.

Landforms

The landforms of the heritage area include the Waitakere Ranges which are the remnants of the uplifted and eroded Waitakere volcano, the coast with its steep cliffs and dunes, stream valleys and the gentler slopes of the foothills.

Potential impacts of development on the landforms of the heritage area include activities that increase erosion and subsidence, the removal of rock, soil or vegetation and anything that detracts from the integrity of these features.

Landscapes

The rural landscapes (such as the foothills and Anzac Valley) of the heritage area consist of pastoral areas and sparse settlement where natural features dominate. The landscape contains elements of indigenous and exotic elements, such as bush and plantation forestry.

The coastal landscapes (including the West Coast, Manukau Harbour and coastal villages) have a sense of natural variety, wildness and openness. Houses are generally low level, with wide yards and extensive planting. The natural elements of the landscape dominate the human-made features.

The bush landscapes (including Laingholm, Titirangi and the upper eastern foothills) contain winding roads along prominent ridgelines, buildings that merge into the extensive bush areas, areas of sparse population with some more intensive settlement and a feeling of peaceful quietness despite proximity to the city.

Potential impacts of development on the landscapes of the heritage area include a shift towards a landscape in which human-made structures dominate the natural elements, removal of native vegetation, encroachment of settlements, and a diminishment of the physical features that are crucial to people’s appreciation of the area.

Click on the following links to view Auckland Council District Plan (Waitakere Section) maps relating to these features.

<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/districtplanwaitakere/maps/policy/outscapes.pdf>

<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/districtplanwaitakere/maps/policy/landforms.pdf>

<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/districtplanwaitakere/maps/policy/landelements.pdf>

The coastal areas

“The coastal areas, which—

- (i) have a natural and dynamic character; and*
- (ii) contribute to the area’s vistas; and*
- (iii) differ significantly from each other.”*

The coasts of the Heritage Area are varied and complex and include the west coast from Bethells/Te Henga to the Manukau Heads and the coastal and estuarine areas from Whatipu to Green Bay.

Landscape elements of the west coast (from Bethells/Te Henga to Manukau Heads) include patterns of dunes, beaches, streams, ridges, headlands, cliffs, islands and coastal forests.

Landscape elements of the Manukau Harbour coast (from Whatipu to Green Bay) include patterns of tidal flats, cliffs and headlands, estuaries and coastal forest.

The **potential impacts** of development in coastal areas include increasing dominance of the built environment over the natural environment and loss of the sense of wilderness, quietness and isolation.

Click on the following link to view the Auckland Council District Plan (Waitakere Section) map relating to these features.

<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/districtplanwaitakere/maps/policy/outcoastal.pdf>

The natural functioning streams of the eastern foothills

The streams of the eastern foothills, the Oratia, Opanuku and Swanson Streams, originate in the Waitakere Ranges and drain into the Waitemata Harbour. The reference to “natural functioning” relates to the fact that these are some of the few remaining natural watercourses in the Heritage Area, the main streams in the Ranges having been dammed for water supply purposes.

The streams have intrinsic value but also provide important ecological services, their vegetated margins preventing contaminants from entering the streams, alleviating flooding and contributing to the amenity of the urban areas.

Potential impacts of development on the streams of the eastern foothills include loss of ecological linkages and biodiversity, an increase in pollution and pest plants and deterioration in the amenity of the areas around the streams.

Click on the following link to view the Auckland Council District Plan (Waitakere Section) map relating to these features.

<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/districtplanwaitakere/maps/policy/landelements.pdf>

The quietness and darkness of the Waitakere Ranges and coastal parts of the area

Outside Titirangi and the eastern boundary of the Heritage Area, the area has low levels of street lighting and a subservience of built environments to rural, bush and coastal landscapes. Houses are screened by bush which minimises the extent to which lighting is visible at night. These factors, along with the size of the undeveloped parklands contribute to a relatively dark night sky and an impression of sparse settlement.

Potential impacts of development on the characteristic quietness of the heritage area include an increase in traffic volume or speed and noisy activities.

Activities that might impact upon the darkness of the area include a decrease in vegetation so that house lights are not screened, increased street lighting and brightly lit activities.

The visual backdrop to the Auckland Metropolitan Area

“The dramatic landform of the Ranges and foothills, which is the visual backdrop to metropolitan Auckland, forming its western skyline”

The Ranges form a striking backdrop to the western skyline of the City. Although the ridgelines are relatively undeveloped and buildings generally have a low profile, removal of vegetation and houses that stand out from the bush because of their size and colour are diminishing the naturalness of the landform.

Potential impacts of development on this visual backdrop include visual deterioration as buildings and other structures intrude upon, and dominate, the natural landform through inappropriate design, location, colour or materials.

Click on the following link to view the Auckland Council District Plan (Waitakere Section) map relating to these features.

<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/districtplanwaitakere/maps/policy/landforms.pdf>

The Heritage Area’s wilderness experience and recreational opportunities

“the opportunities that the area provides for wilderness experiences, recreation, and relaxation in close proximity to metropolitan Auckland”

The Waitakere Ranges area, and in particular the Regional Parkland and the West Coast beaches, are popular destinations for visitors. It is estimated that the Waitakere Ranges receive about 2.5 million visits each year, many of whom enjoy a range of activities in the Regional Park.

The [Regional Parks Management Plan 2010](#) controls visitor activity within the Regional Park.

Potential impacts of recreation activities on the Heritage Area include loss of amenity for local residents due to visitor numbers and activities, pressure on infrastructure such as roads, car parks and septic tanks and damage to ecosystems and tracks.

The eastern foothills

(h) *the eastern foothills, which—*

(i) act as a buffer between metropolitan Auckland and the forested ranges and coasts; and

(ii) provide a transition from metropolitan Auckland to the forested ranges and coast:

The eastern foothills can be separated into upper and lower foothills. The upper foothills include Titirangi and Laingholm, upper Opanuku and Oratia, displaying a strong connection with the Ranges through their elevation above the urban areas of the city and the extent of

their native vegetation.

The lower foothills are less steep, with remnant pockets of vegetation, and retain their visual connection to the Ranges through their rural character.

From an ecological viewpoint, the eastern foothills buffer the Ranges from the environmental effects (such as plant and animal pests) of the more densely populated metropolitan Auckland. A variety of landscapes merge into one another, providing a visual transition from urban Waitakere to the Ranges.

Potential impacts on the buffering function of the eastern foothills include visually obtrusive development introducing urban elements into the rural landscapes, removal of streamside vegetation and loss of rural land uses leading to pressure for subdivision

The subservience of the built environment to the area's natural and rural landscape

(i) the subservience of the built environment to the area's natural and rural landscape, which is reflected in—

- (i) the individual identity and character of the coastal villages and their distinctive scale, containment, intensity, and amenity; and*
- (ii) the distinctive harmony, pleasantness, and coherence of the low density residential and urban areas that are located in regenerating (and increasingly dominant) forest settings; and*
- (iii) the rural character of the foothills to the east and north and their intricate pattern of farmland, orchards, vineyards, uncultivated areas, indigenous vegetation, and dispersed low density settlement with few urban scale activities:*

The 'subservience' referred to in this subsection describes the extent to which the settlements of the heritage area nestle into their surrounding environment, rather than appearing superimposed upon it. Maintaining this subservience requires careful management of subdivision and development.

The coastal villages exhibit individual identity and character through their scale, form and intensity of development. The villages are contained within the landscape and are generally dominated by natural elements.

Subservience is particularly evident in the bush living environments of Laingholm, Titirangi and the upper eastern foothills. Steep slopes and unstable land require a particular style of housing, generally pole houses, rather than suburban style development..

In the lower foothills the rural character is provided by the pattern of properties on spacious lots, farms, orchards, vineyards, uncultivated areas and native bush.

Potential impacts on this feature include development that dominates its surroundings through size, location, colour and reflectivity and vegetation removal.

Historical, traditional and cultural relationships

'the historical, traditional, and cultural relationships of people, communities, and tangata whenua with the area and their exercise of kaitiakitanga and stewardship'

The historical, traditional and cultural relationships of people, communities and tangata whenua are recorded in written and oral history and in the physical evidence of that relationship. Ngati Whatua and Te Kawerau a Maki have both issued resource management statements setting out their key concerns. Deeds of acknowledgement (section 29 of the Act) may be used to acknowledge the historical, cultural or spiritual relationships of tangata whenua with public land within the Heritage Area.

The history of the coastal villages such as Te Henga, Piha, Huia and Cornwallis, established to service farming, milling, infrastructure and recreation, has been extensively recorded. Farming and orchards thrived in the Foothills for many years, and the rural character endures despite changes in land use.

Potential impacts of development on these relationships include lack of consultation on resource management issues and lack of provision for cultural and spiritual values in decision-making. Sites may become degraded or impacted upon by visitor activity or by pest plants and animals.

Evidence of past human activities

'the evidence of past human activities in the area, including those in relation to timber extraction, gum digging, flax milling, mineral extraction, quarrying, extensive farming, and water impoundment and supply'

This feature refers to the physical evidence of both pre-colonial Maori settlement (dating back approximately 1,000 years) and colonial activity.

The Auckland Council District Plan (Waitakere Section) lists heritage items, archaeological sites, heritage vegetation and waahi tapu.

Potential impacts of development on the history and culture of the heritage area include destruction or modification of heritage items and consequent loss of heritage values.

Click on the following link to view the Auckland Council District Plan (Waitakere Section) Heritage Appendix.

<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/districtplanwaitakere/text/text/heritageapx.pdf>

The Heritage Area's distinctive local communities

There are a number of distinctive rural and coastal communities in the Ranges. Each has its own unique character, amenity and identity based on the historical and present-day development patterns. Local Area Plans help to identify the heritage features for a given area and localise the objectives of the Act.

Potential impacts of development on the distinctive communities of the Heritage Area include:

- physical changes to the landscape such as removal of bush, sprawling development, construction of buildings that dominate their surroundings due to their size, location, materials or colour
- increased population and increased noise
- loss of public access.

The Waitakere Ranges Regional Park

‘the Waitakere Ranges Regional Park and its importance as an accessible public place with significant natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resource’:

Acquisition and gifting of land since the late 19th century culminated in the creation of the approximately 17,000ha of regional parkland in the Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area today.

Potential impacts on the park include an increase in visitor numbers to a level where people’s ability to access the park is limited, their enjoyment of the park decreases and the physical environment of the Park suffers.

The [Regional Parks Management Plan 2010](#) sets out Council’s approach to managing activities in the [Waitakere Ranges Regional Park](#).

The public water catchment and supply system.

‘The public water catchment and supply system, the operation, maintenance, and development of which serves the people of Auckland’

The five water supply dams in the Regional Parkland, operated by Watercare Services Ltd, provide 25% of Auckland’s bulk water and supply households in West Auckland, the City’s south western suburbs, parts of the North Shore and Whangaparaoa/Orewa. Water supply in the Heritage Area comes not only from the dams but also from bores and streams.

Recent surveys of streams in the foothills and bush living areas of the Waitakere Ranges have found that most have ‘good’ water quality.

Potential impacts of development on water quality and quantity include:

- Contamination of water ways through run off of sediment, sewage, stormwater and animal faeces
- Degradation of the health and functioning of aquatic ecosystems through removal of riparian (streamside) vegetation, introduction of weeds and alteration of natural water courses
- cutting and clearance of bush and vegetation on and adjacent to water areas and within the coastal environment
- increase in the size and frequency of flood events.

Click on the following Auckland Council District Plan (Waitakere Section) map relating to this feature.

<http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/districtplanwaitakere/maps/policy/waterresources.pdf>

If you need further information please email: ranges@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz