



PERCEPTION PLANNING
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Landscape Report

RURAL LAND USE ASSESSMENT (RLUA)

Prepared for Upper Hutt City Council

18 September 2019



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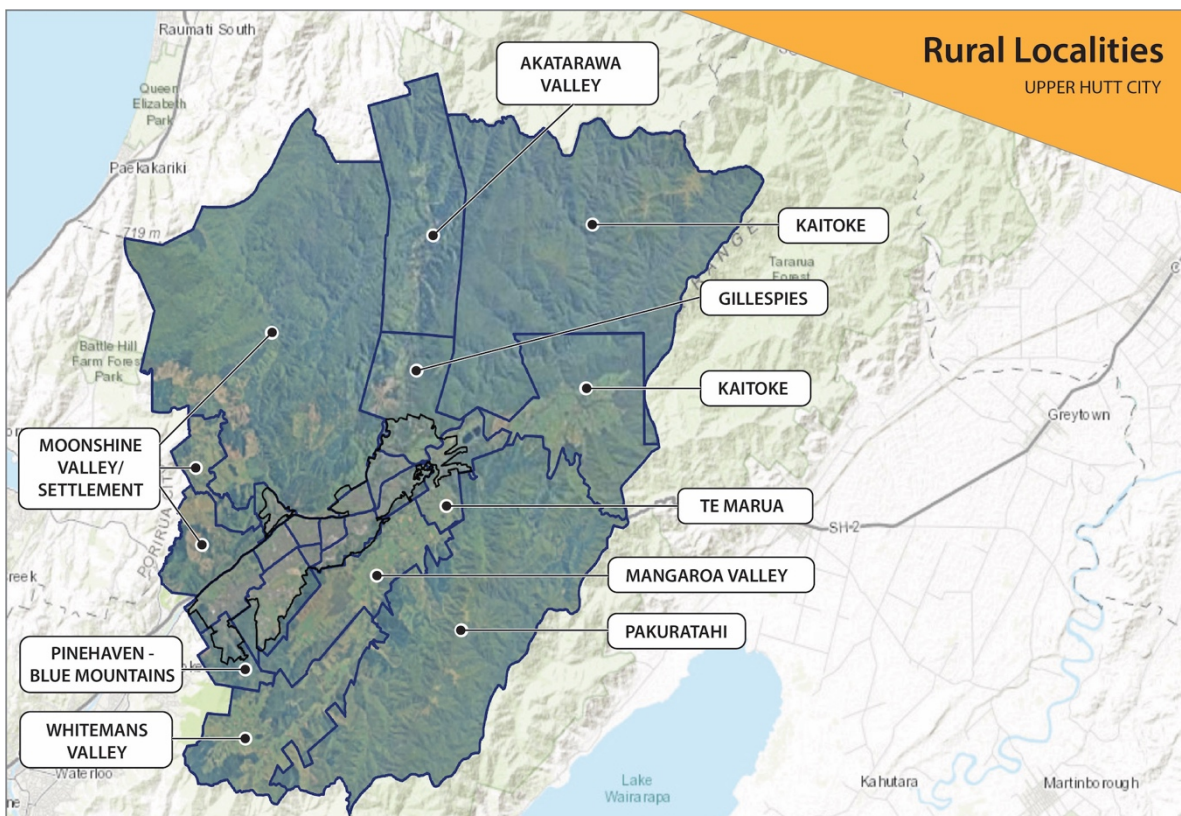
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1 Introduction

This landscape report has been prepared to inform a Rural Land Use Assessment (RLUA) for Upper Hutt City Council. The RLUA will provide important background evidence for the council’s review of its district plan provisions for the rural environment.

This report provides a landscape assessment of a number of ‘rural localities’ in Upper Hutt. It draws upon existing landscape data, analysis and assessment, and considers existing development patterns and factors that influence future growth in the district’s rural environment.

The report focuses on landscape character and sensitivity for rural subdivision and development on privately-owned land and considers the existing policy framework for managing effects on landscape character and visual amenity. It then explores some ideas for how Upper Hutt City Council can respond to future growth and development in the rural environment.



The Council has identified a number of rural locality areas (as illustrated in the **Rural Localities Map**).

Of all the rural localities, these ones are considered by the Council to be the most likely to be subject to development pressure for rural residential living:

- Te Marua
- Mangaroa Valley
- Whitemans Valley
- Gillespies
- Akatarawa Valley
- Kaitoke
- Moonshine Valley/Settlement

The previous '*Hutt Landscape Study*' (Boffa Miskell, 2012) and the '*Upper Hutt District Landscape Study*' (Isthmus Group, 2017) describe the city's rural landscape by character areas, which are typically distinct valleys or catchments. This report references and relies on landscape descriptions set out in those reports to describe the specific landscape characteristics of the individual rural localities.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Current planning strategies have influenced the existing development patterns in Upper Hutt's rural landscape. Historic development patterns themselves have also become a characterising feature in the landscape, such as the distinctive suburban neighbourhood density along Maclaren Street, which sits in the middle of rural Maymorn.

Rural character will be better protected from future development if it is designed in response to landscape values¹. The design of new development should address rural amenity and character effects. When addressing the landscape's character and appearance, it's ecological function and integrity will also be an issue to keep in consideration.

It is also worth thinking about how factors such as connectivity and spatial layout support the sustainable development of rural communities. Strategically, spatial design (including density or zoning patterns) can support the use of community hubs and meeting points, and wider use of public transport and active transport options.

1.1 Limitations and assumptions

This report was prepared with the following limitations and assumptions.

1. As stated above, this report relies on the landscape descriptions set out in the previous '*Hutt Landscape Study*' (Boffa Miskell, 2012) and the '*Upper Hutt District Landscape Study*' (Isthmus Group, 2017).
2. The Council has identified a number of potential Outstanding Natural Landscapes and Landscape Features (ONFLs), Special Amenity Landscapes (SALs) and Significant Natural

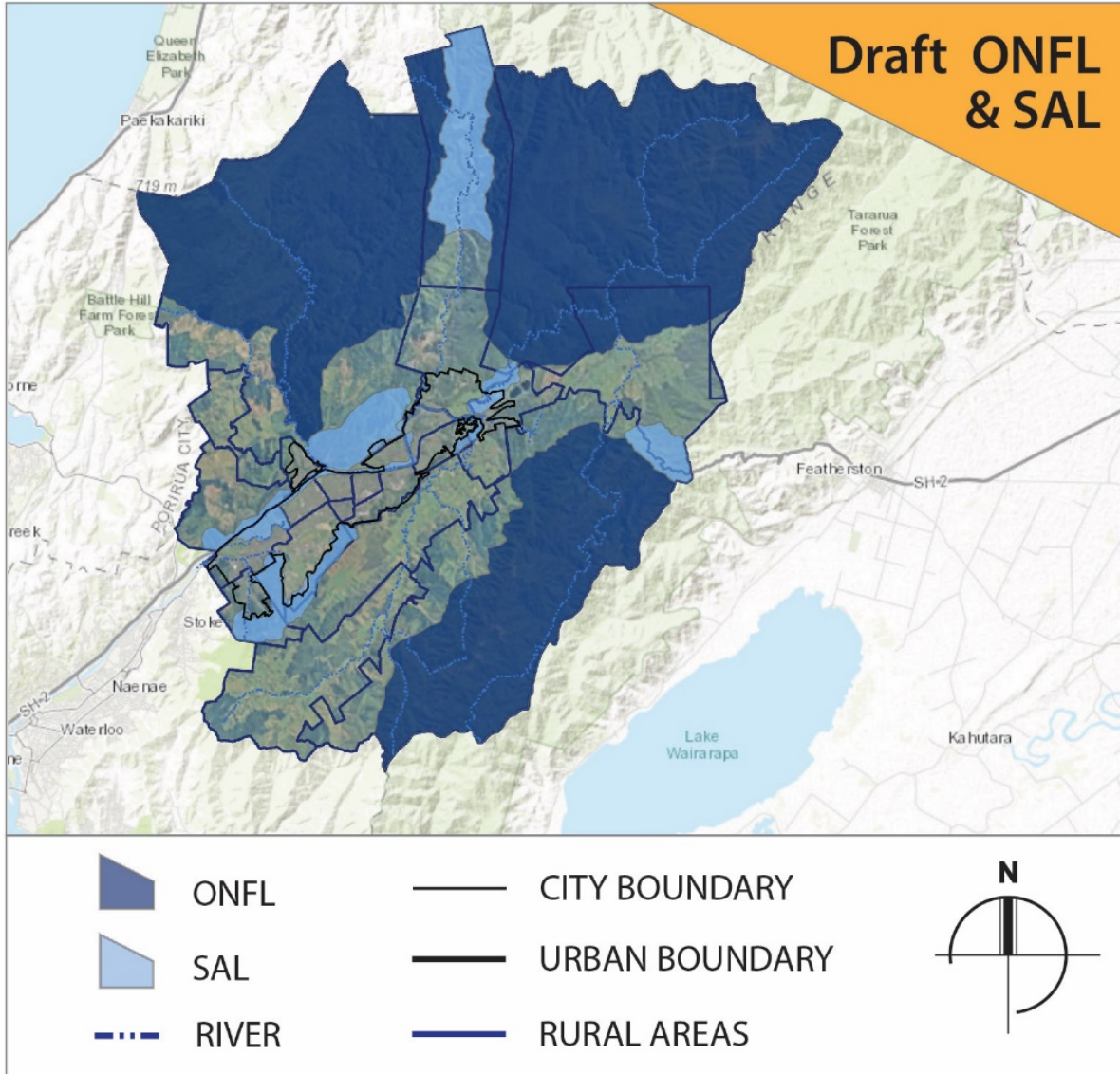
¹ The 'Amended Pigeon Bay Criteria' are an accepted approach (established by RMA case law) to identify **landscape values**. Criteria are grouped under 3 categories:

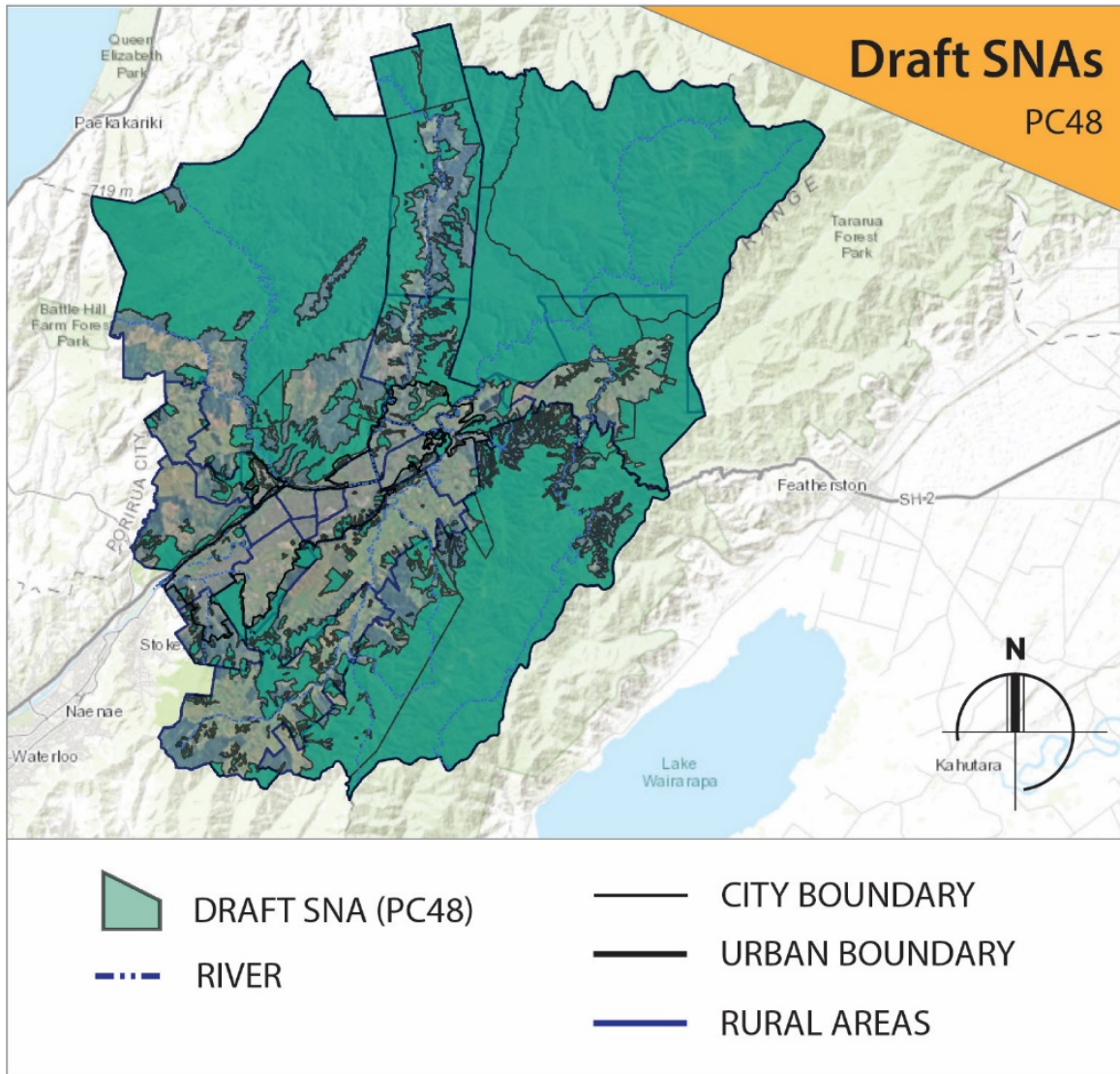
- Biophysical elements, patterns and processes
- Associative meaning and values (including spiritual, cultural and social associations)
- Sensory or perceptual qualities

This approach may help inform landscape responsive policy, assessment matters or design guides.

Areas (SNAs) which have not yet been incorporated into the District Plan (see the **Draft ONFL & SALs Map** and **Draft SNAs Map**). The final areas will be subject to public consultation and potential modification and will be incorporated into the district plan through a separate plan change.

3. This report focuses on the rural landscapes which are not proposed to be included in these significant landscape and ecological classification areas (i.e. draft ONFLs, SALs and SNAs).
4. Landscape character, and in this report *rural character* specifically, encompasses the qualities and characteristics of a rural landscape. This may include the 'dominance of open space over built form' and the 'cultural layer' of a productive working land use. A green pastoral rural landscape is informal (unrefined, not overtly manicured) in character, in contrast to an urban setting.
5. This report has been prepared in the absence of any input from tangata whenua. As their values hold the landscape close, this remains to be woven through with regards to revising the rural chapter. Likewise, this report has been prepared by relying on values captured during previous consultation exercises; not gathered specifically for this report.





2 Existing landscape character and sensitivity

At a broad scale, the primary valley of the Upper Hutt landscape is surrounded by dominant ranges including the Tararua and Remutaka Ranges. These are highly valued landscape features, providing a forested backdrop to the Hutt Valley urban area.

At a more localised scale, rural 'sub-valleys' framed by internal hills have their own landscape character and qualities. Their unique identities are a product of varying landform, land cover and land use. The varying density of rural-residential use through Upper Hutt's rural environment is also relevant.

There are areas within the Upper Hutt's rural landscape that are transitioning from traditional farming land use to rural lifestyle development. The drawcard of the district's rural area as a place to live is the hill-framed valley landscapes, offering rural character and amenity within commutable distances from urban Upper Hutt and other areas in the Greater Wellington region.

This section of the report looks at existing landscape character and sensitivity to development in the rural localities. The 'sub-valley' rural localities are illustrated on the **Rural Localities Map** and are described below.

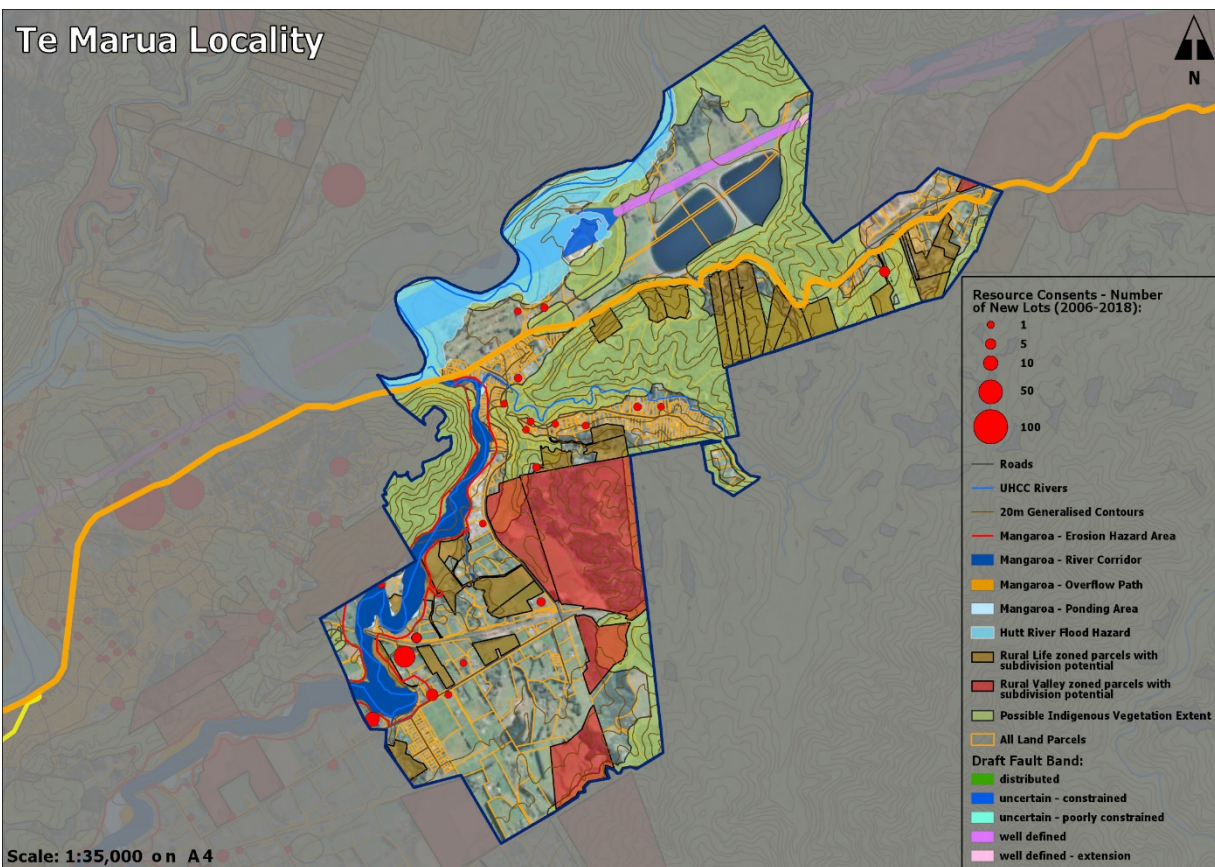
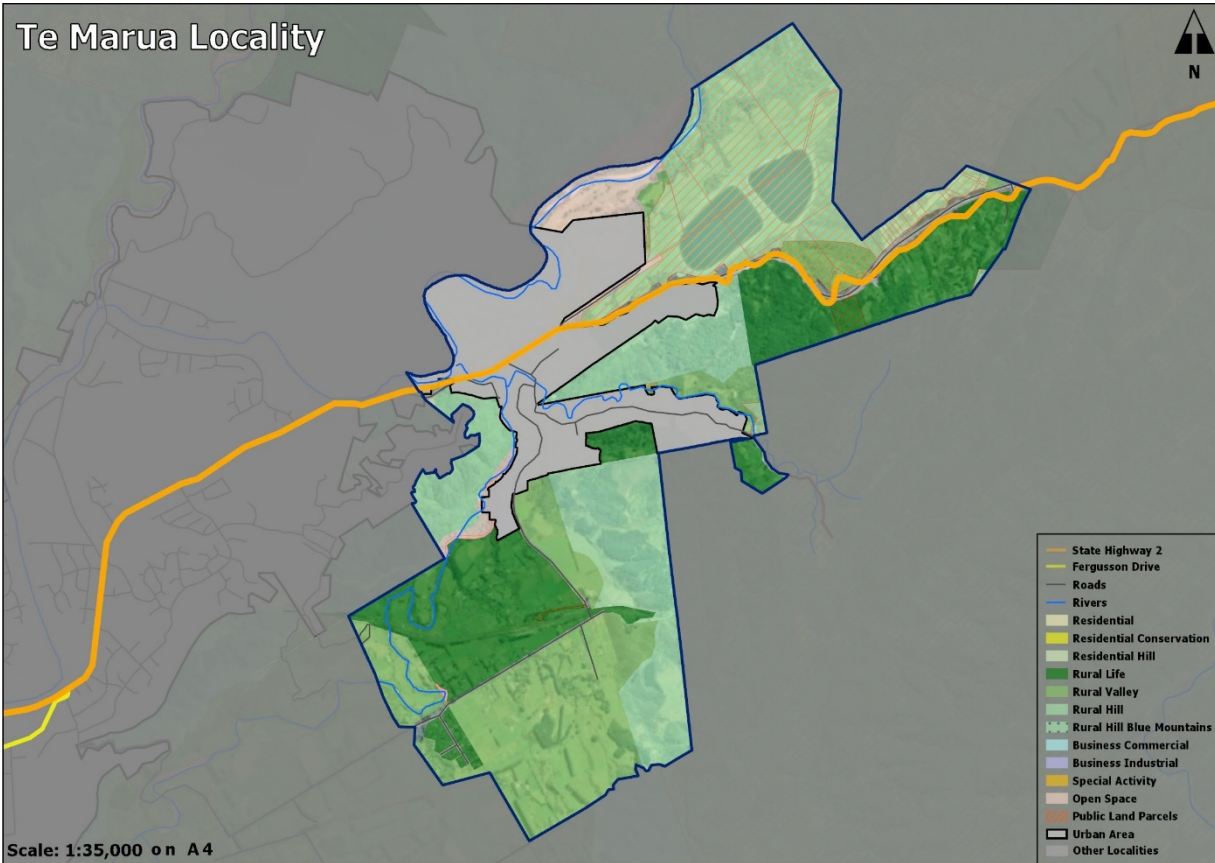
2.1 Te Marua (Maymorn) Locality

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The relevant aspect of the Te Marua rural locality includes the area from the proposed Gabites Growth Area (Land Use Strategy - Upper Hutt, 2016) in the north, extending south through to include Maclaren Street. This locality sits to the north of the Mangaroa Valley and is separated from the urban Hutt Valley area by intervening low hills. More northern areas of the Te Marua are excluded (encompassing urban areas and treatment ponds).

The northern aspect (i.e. south of the Gabites Block) of the valley is distinctive for its unique combination of landscape features (both natural and cultural) including:

- The rail line aligned diagonally through this valley area
- Maclaren Street, with its historic suburban-scale residential development pattern
- The (in-part, lower lying) tree-lined meandering Mangaroa River winding through the valley (with associated hazards)
- The proposed growth area to the north



The valley floor area is dissected by the rail line, road, river and trees. This somewhat compartmentalises the landscape, and taller elements (such as trees groups and shelterbelts) can impede some views across the valley. The narrow roads lined with hedges create an enclosed and small-scale domesticated landscape (Boffa Miskell Ltd, 2012, p. 32).

The distinctly more urban scale quarter-acre (approx. 1000m²) properties lining Maclaren Street were established during the construction of the Remutaka Railway (Upper Hutt City District Plan, 2004, Objective 5.3.1).



Maclaren Street - suburban scale development

Much of the land in the Te Marua rural locality, and other areas such as Mangaroa Valley, was used for farming post European settlement, though now small landholdings of 10ha or less dominate the valley floor (Boffa Miskell Ltd, 2012, p. 32).

The Maymorn area provides a link to past rail history, Pakuratahi Forest Park, and marks all rail entry/exit to the northeast part of the district (Isthmus Group Ltd, 2017, p. 44).

SENSITIVITY TO DEVELOPMENT

There is a predominantly informal and relaxed rural landscape character through this area. More widespread development here could set up a 'shift' from rural to a more urban character.

Rural landscape character can be appreciated from vistas of and across central areas of the valley, such as the landscape publicly visible from Parkes Line Road (an important local distributor road). For instance, the scenic rural outlook associated with aspects of the Mangaroa River is a defining element of the rural landscape character here.



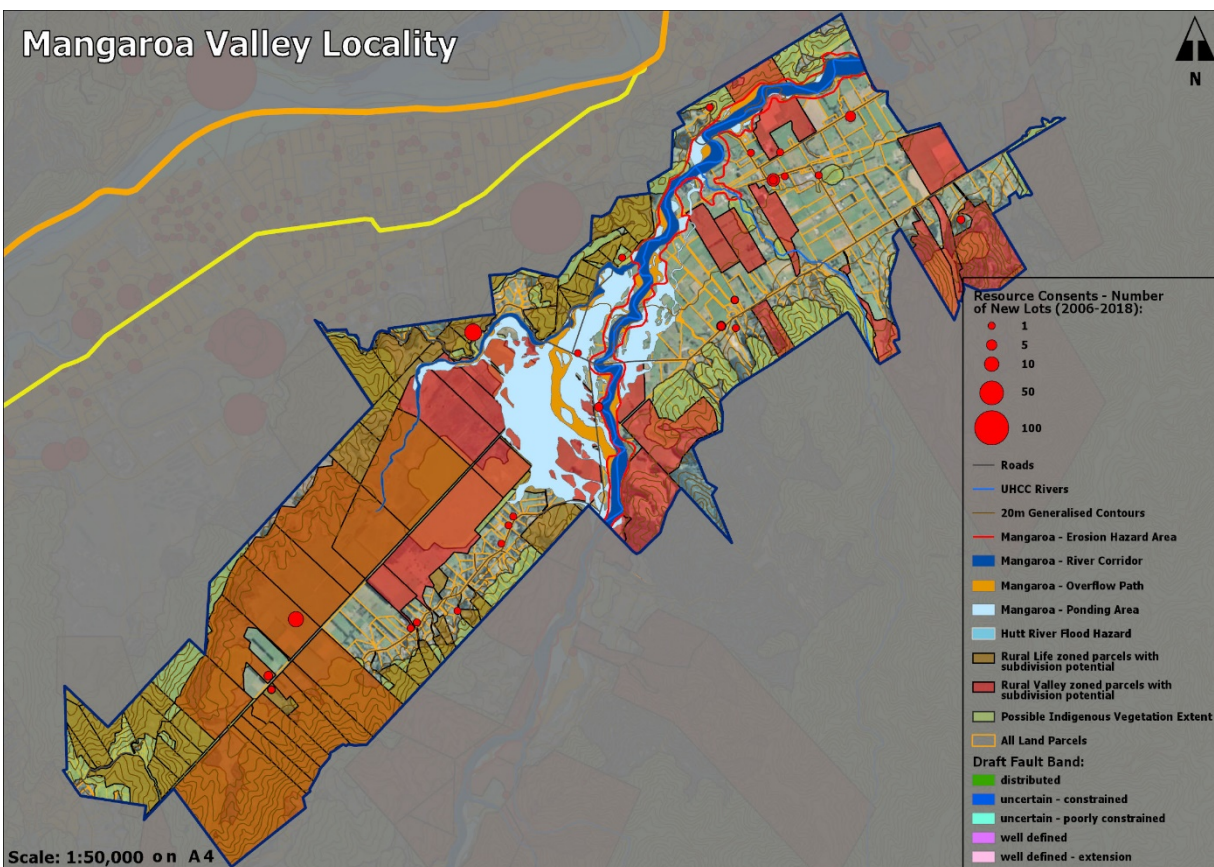
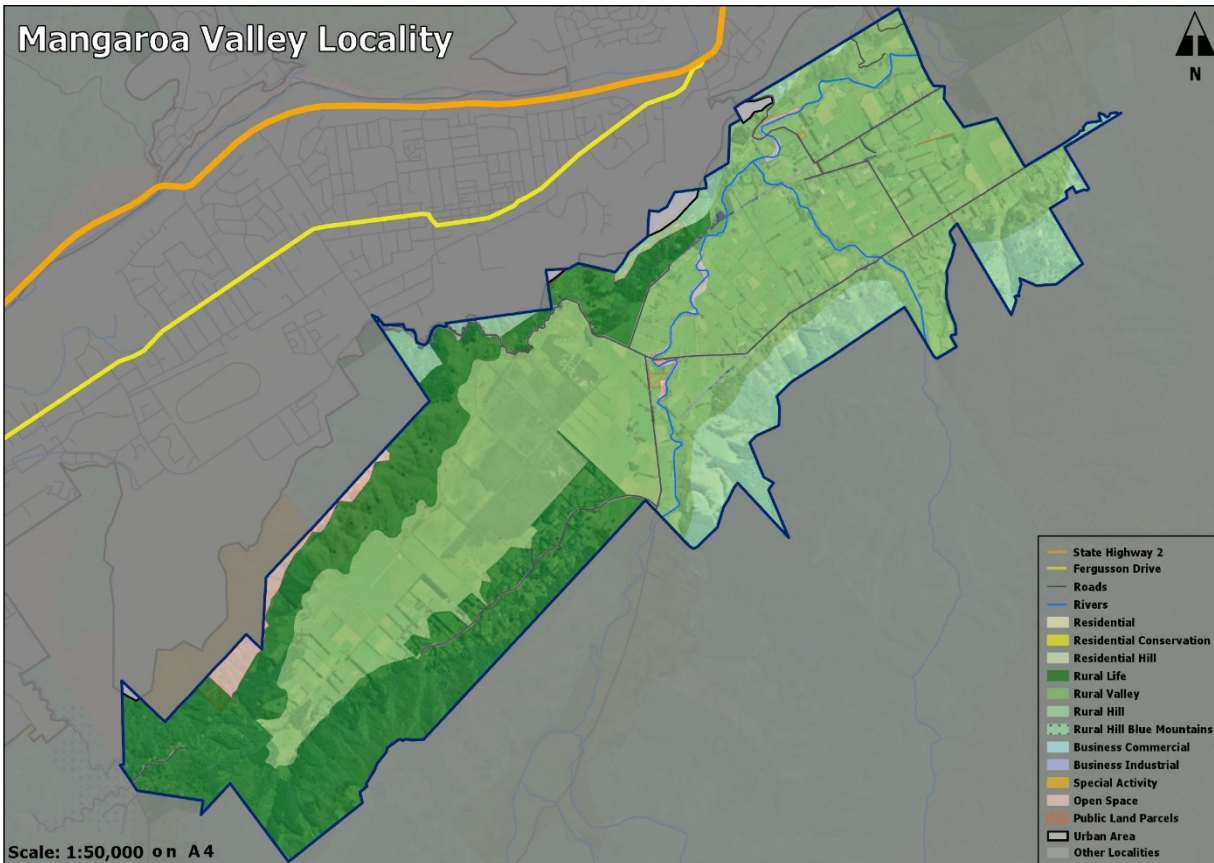
Maymorn - vista looking north towards the Mangaroa River from Parkes Line Road

2.2 Mangaroa Valley Locality

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Mangaroa Valley locality is broadly rural in character, in that open space dominates the area over built form.

The Mangaroa Valley is a long valley area, aligned north-east south-west from near Maclaren Street in the north, through to Pinehaven-Blue Mountains in the south. Much of the flatland valley is in pasture for farming, while the hill slopes are covered in a mix of regenerating natives, exotic scrub and pine plantation (Boffa Miskell Ltd, 2012, p. 33).



Located towards the north of the valley are local (cultural) landscape features including the Wallaceville Church (Presbyterian), an historic building (built in 1893) and Mangaroa School on Flux Road.

The Mangaroa School website home page begins by describing its landscape setting (*emphasis added*):

*'Welcome to Mangaroa School, a **semi-rural** primary school catering for students in Years 1-6. **Nestled in the picturesque Mangaroa Valley, surrounded by lifestyle blocks, our school provides a wonderful learning environment'***

There's almost an intrinsic 'wholesome goodness' associated with this rural landscape setting. The school website goes on to explain that the other drawcard is its proximity to urban areas. This neatly sums up the appeal of this area to prospective families.

In the south-west of Mangaroa Valley locality is the established Katherine Mansfield Drive rural residential development (described in Appendix 2 of this report). Below that, the Wallaceville Swamp extends down to the southern end of the Valley, and road access becomes narrower. I note that there are six life-style lots currently marketed for sale at the base of the southern hills and lower slopes (as per photograph below).



South Mangaroa/Wallaceville Swamp - advertised lifestyle block subdivision

The Katherine Mansfield Drive development consists of established lifestyle properties, located against the base of east facing slopes. Land parcel sizes range in area from 4ha up to 40ha, and the larger sections are either more elevated or on the valley floor. This is a well-treed area of

lifestyle block development. West of this subdivision, the valley floor remains a primarily open pastoral landscape.

SENSITIVITY TO DEVELOPMENT

The whole valley (including Maymorn in the Te Marua locality) is easily accessible, being located 'just over the hill' to the east of urban Upper Hutt. This area may see a notable change in character with more widespread increased density. Existing development nodes include areas around the Wallaceville Church (akin to a traditional crossroads settlement) and around Mangaroa School on Flux Road. These are clustered groups of dwellings/buildings and are distinct from their more open pastoral surrounds. A consented development at 29 Mangaroa Valley Road includes a large café development.

The positive outcomes achieved by the Katherine Mansfield Drive development area (refer to section 4.1 'What's working well' of this report) do not inherently mean that further growth would be appropriate here. Beyond the area of existing development, there is generally greater landscape sensitivity in the Mangaroa Valley locality because of the more elevated hill slopes and the open valley landscape. The 'landscape capacity' has largely been taken up by the existing development that is nestled into the lower hillside.

2.3 Whitemans Valley Locality

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

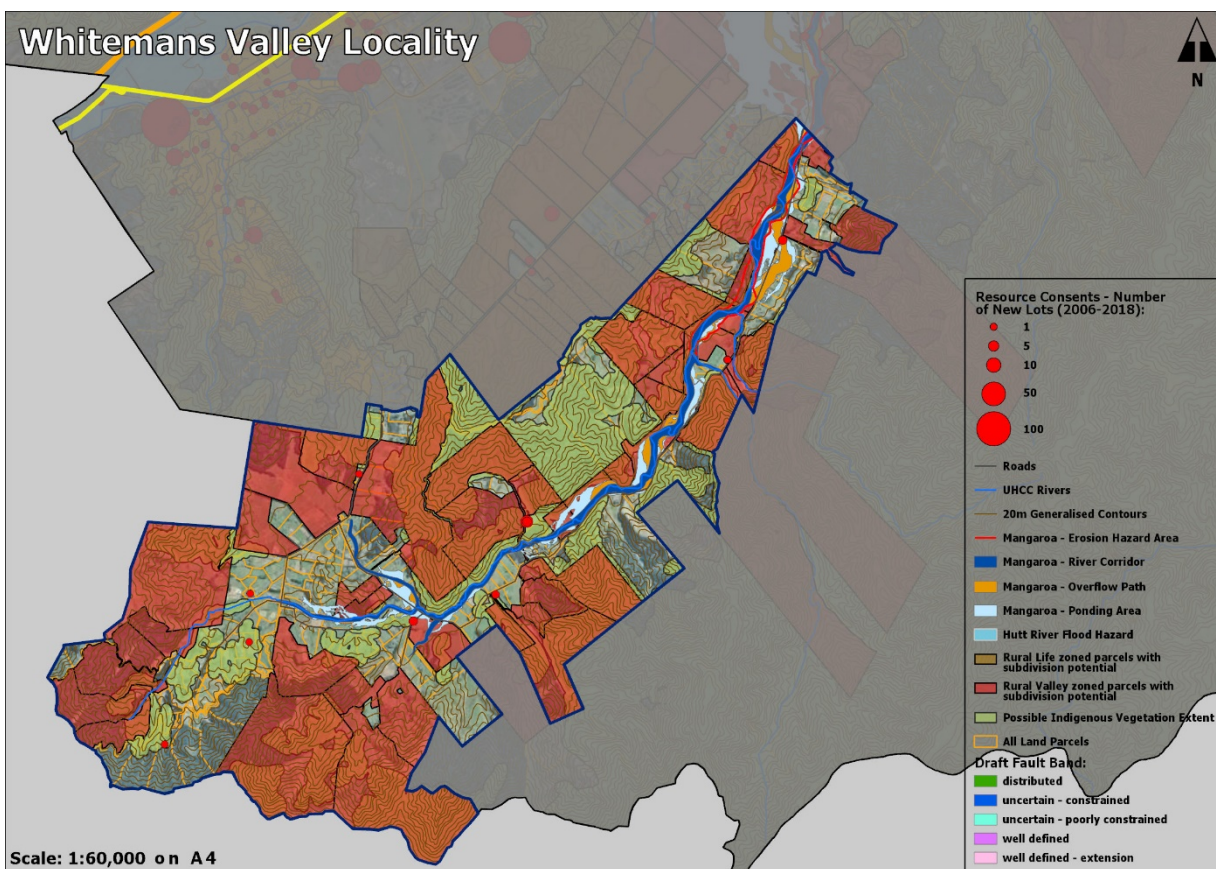
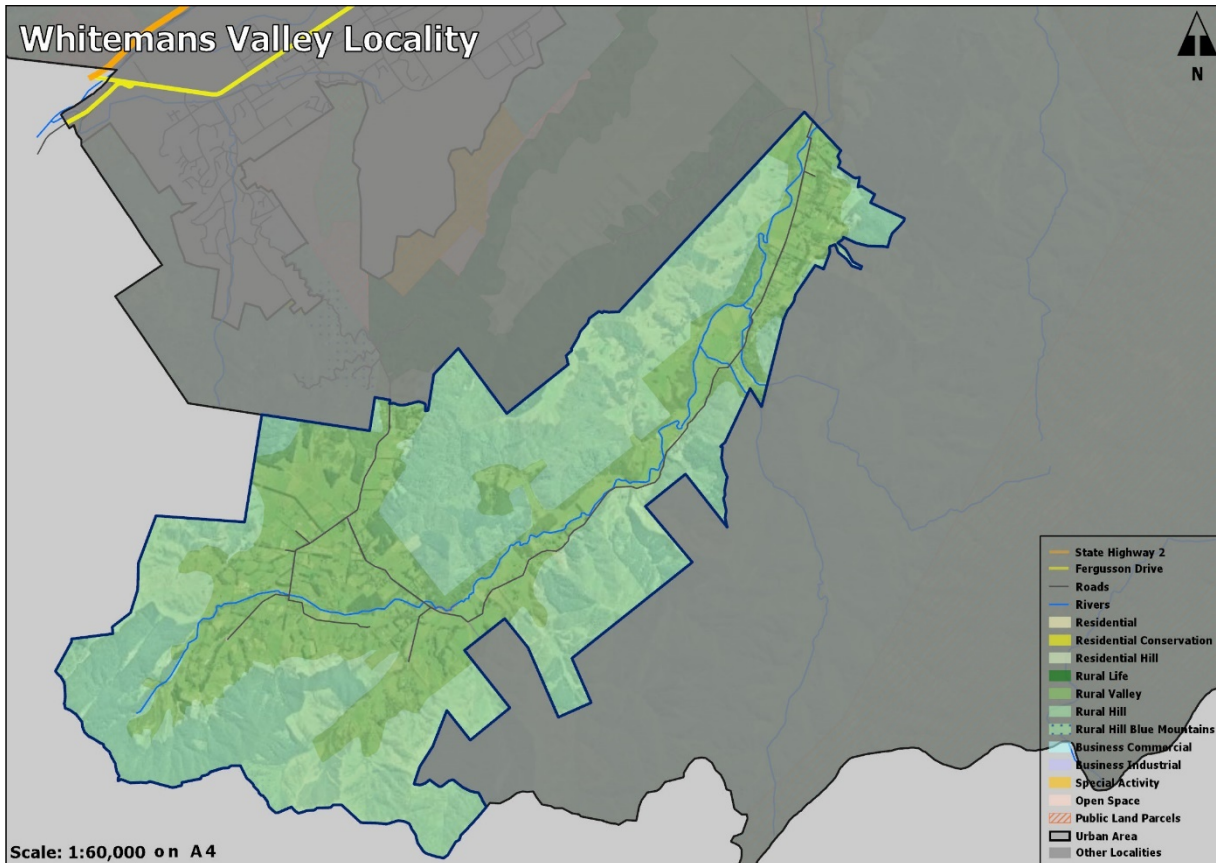
Whitemans Valley locality sits to the south-south-east of Mangaroa Valley and trends north-east south-west. At its northern end, Whitemans Valley is bowl-like, with the valley narrowing to the south between steep terrain.

There is a sense of enclosure and unique microclimate enhanced by the outlier landform separating the basin from Wallaceville Swamp (Isthmus Group Ltd, 2017, p. 40). As the 'second valley back' from Upper Hutt's urban area, Whitemans Valley has a greater sense of isolation in its mid to southern areas compared to its northern aspect or compared to the adjacent Mangaroa Valley.



North Whitemans Valley - view to hillside indigenous vegetation at the intersection of Whitemans Valley Road and Katherine Mansfield Drive

The Council have identified that indigenous vegetation on selected hill aspects may be of a quality that meets the Significant Natural Areas threshold under the RPS. Large areas of hillside in the Whitemans Valley locality would potentially be protected under draft SNA classification.



For the narrower middle section of the valley, it is only 1-2 properties wide. The photograph below illustrates the valley's narrow width in this area.



Mid Whitemans Valley - road side view of narrow valley area

The densest allotments are located at either end of the valley, typically with parcel sizes between 0.7–2ha at the northern end. At the very southern end of the locality, the landscape opens out again slightly. Road access continues through the south to urban areas (via the Pinehaven locality).

The headwaters of Mangaroa River are located in the south of the Whitemans Valley (Boffa Miskell Ltd, 2012, p. 33). The river flows north from here through Whitemans Valley and into Mangaroa. There are multiple hazards associated with the river corridor, including flooding and ponding.

SENSITIVITY TO DEVELOPMENT

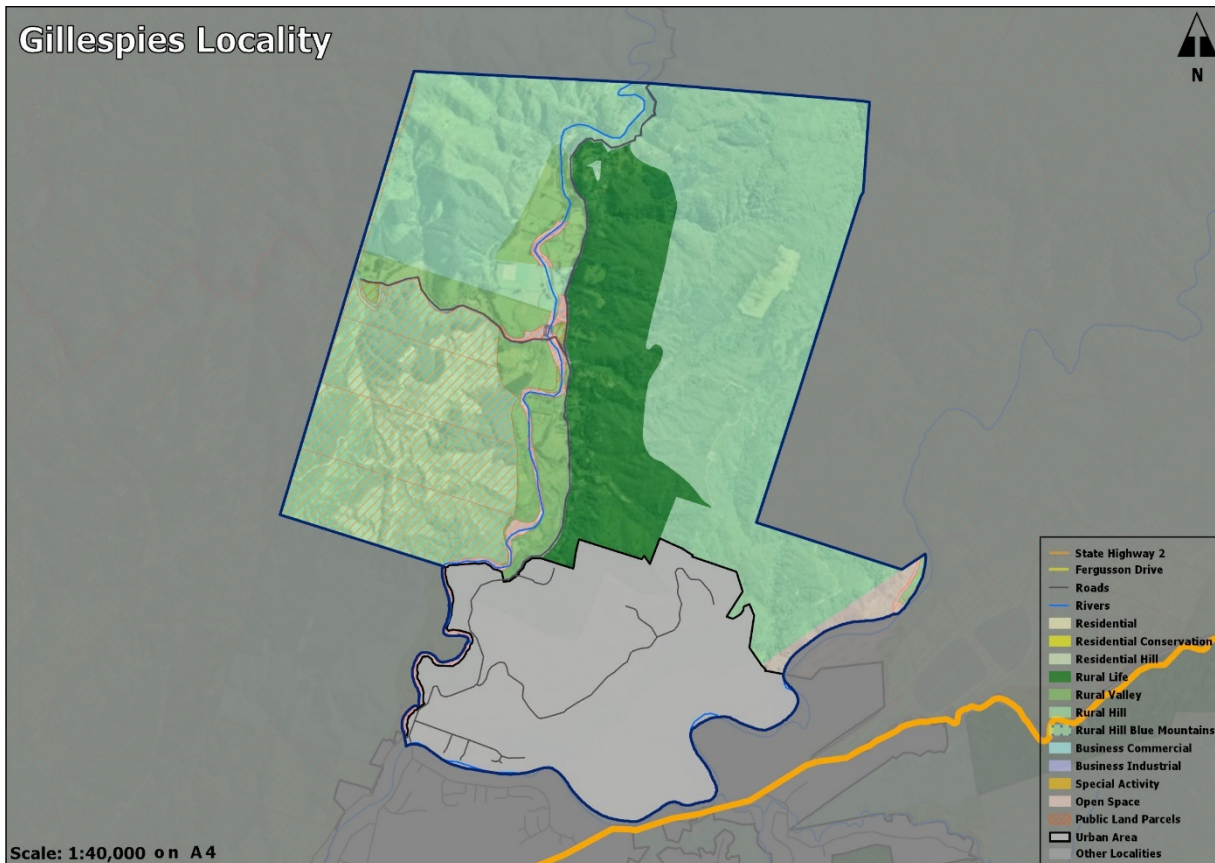
The indigenous native vegetation of the surrounding hills is a key factor of the local landscape values in this area. The valley is relatively narrow along much of its length, and in other areas the potentially developable area is also close to the road, which means any future development may be prominent (and close) for public views.

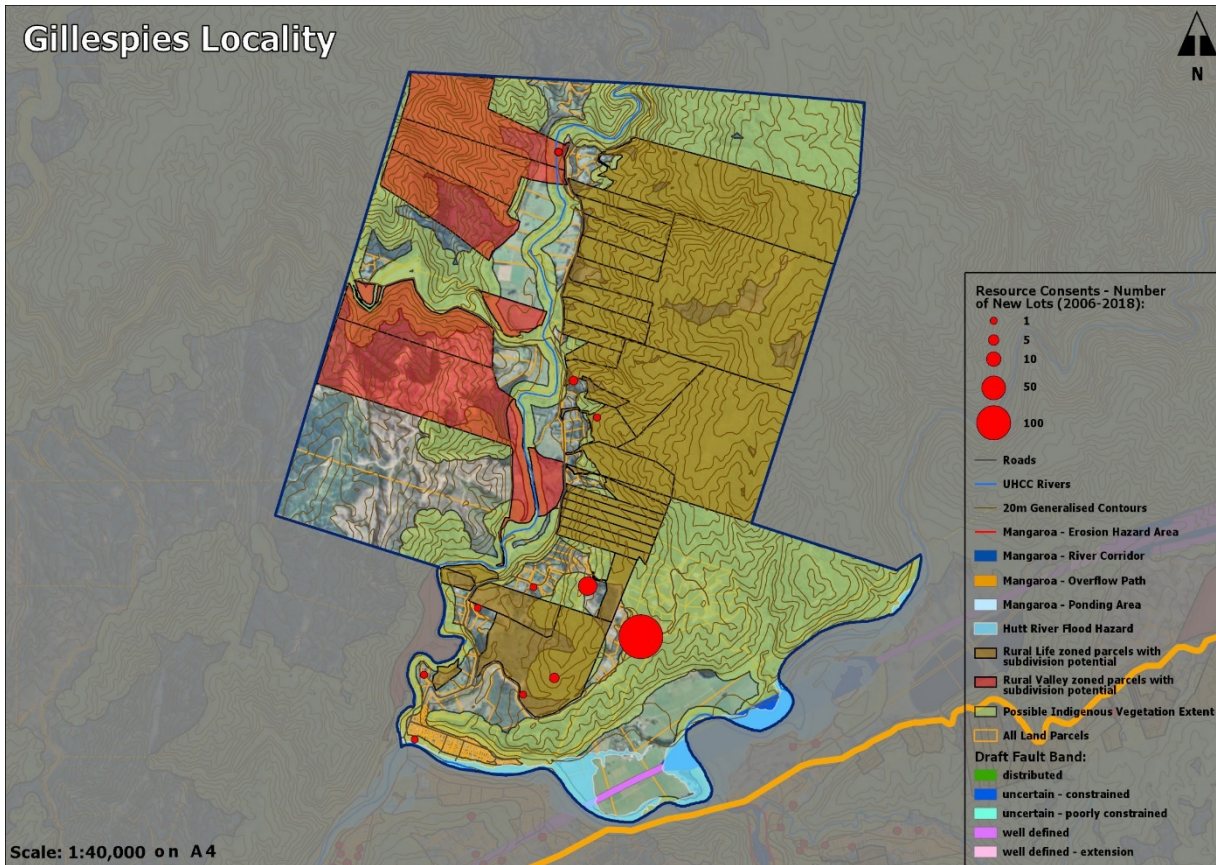
Through the southern area, curved driveways wind through the landscape up from the road and across the undulating rolling countryside. The typically elevated aspect of dwellings above the road can highlight the peppered development pattern through this relatively open area.

2.4 Gillespies Locality

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Gillespies locality sits between Upper Hutt's northern suburbs and the Akatarawa Valley. The broader area includes urban land and the Gillespies growth area (both of which are beyond the scope of this report).





On the ground, the boundary between the urban and rural areas in this locality is unclear. Suburban-density residential areas are found to the south of the Akatarawa Cemetery, however urban residential zoning (which has not yet been developed) extends further north. The urban/rural edge through this area is unclear because the land use development patterns in this area don't reflect their underlying zoning.



Gillespies - rural scale allotments within suburban zoning

To the north of the area, development patterns reflect ease of access and a practical response to the steep terrain, with a pattern of ribbon development (and in some places cluster development) situated 'above' the road. These properties are also located for solar gain.

SENSITIVITY TO DEVELOPMENT

This area currently has an unclear urban edge, with larger land parcels situated within the urban residential zone. This means the existing landscape character could change 'as of right' to smaller allotments, via subdivision.

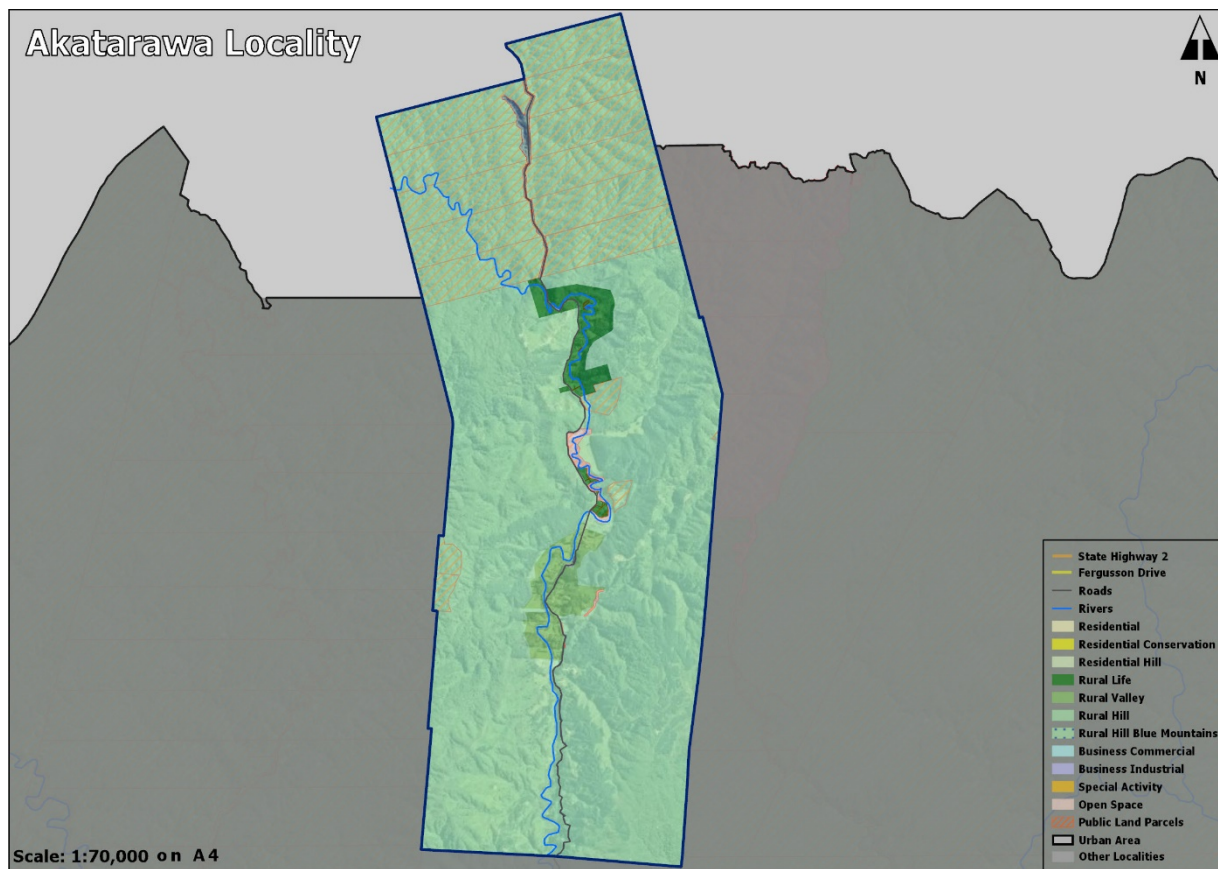
With this will come a 'shift' in landscape character and progressively a more urbanised and 'built up' local character, and a potentially awkward ad-hoc arrangement of densities and development approaches. This outcome may be unforeseen by existing residents; that neighbouring or nearby properties could easily be 'carved up'.

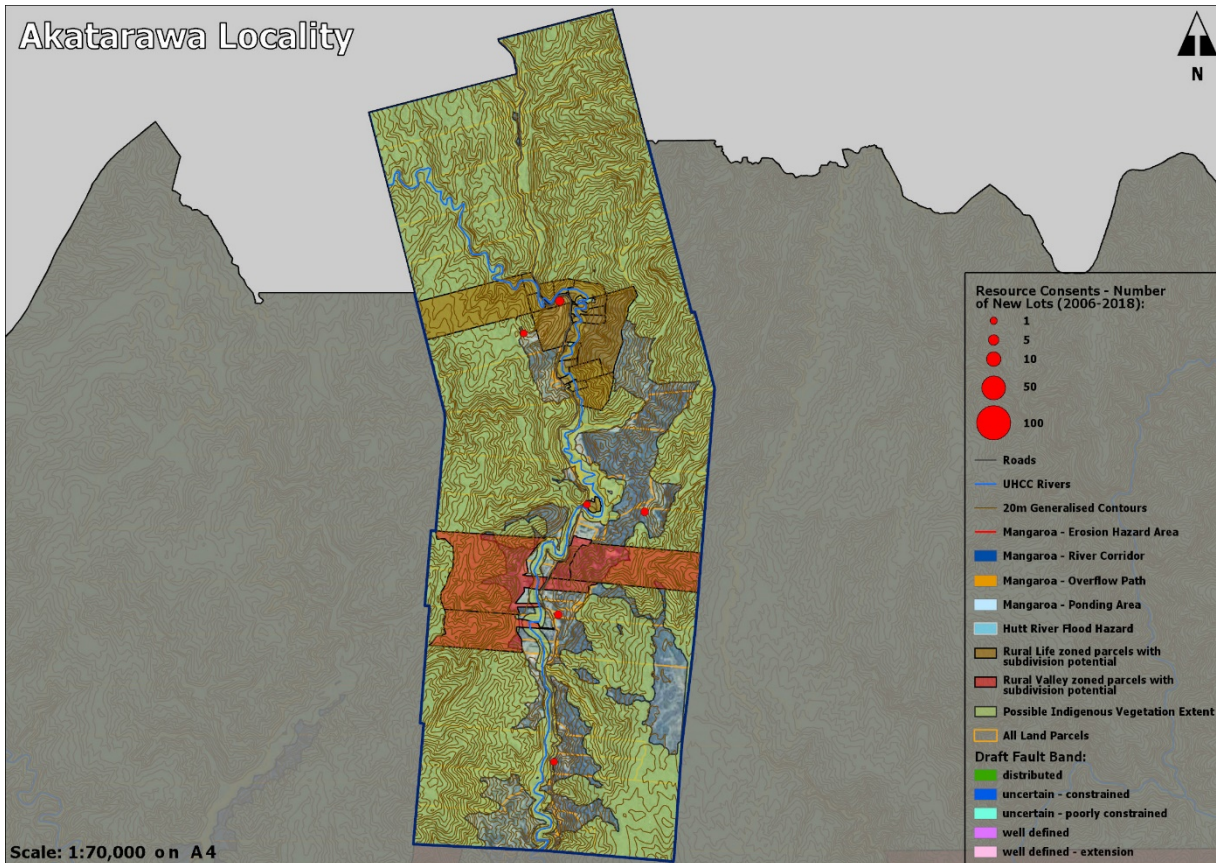
2.5 Akatarawa Valley Locality

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Akatarawa Valley is located in the northern part of the Upper Hutt rural area, north of the Gillespies locality. The complex landscape of this narrow and well-forested valley unfolds and comes into view when it is travelled through. Only a limited extent of the valley is visible from any one location on the road. The valley is enclosed by steep convoluted slopes, which are dissected by the deep gullies of Akatarawa River tributaries (Boffa Miskell Ltd, 2012, p. 58).

The valley is sparsely populated with nearly all of the settlement clustered at the southern end adjacent the road (Boffa Miskell Ltd, 2012, p. 58).





Dwellings are often located near the road boundary or access route as a practical response to the terrain, or because of flood risk associated with the Akatarawa River. This development pattern extends into the adjoining Gillespies area (i.e. Crest Road). Much of this development is located uphill from Akatarawa Road, and in places is well hidden from the road.



Akatarawa Valley – an example of discrete development set back above the road

The valley is well described in the Boffa Miskell and Isthmus landscape studies and is noted for its location among ranges identified as potential ONFL and SAL classification areas.

SENSITIVITY TO DEVELOPMENT

Vegetation cover as a key characteristic in this locality is sensitive to more wholesale clearance for development.

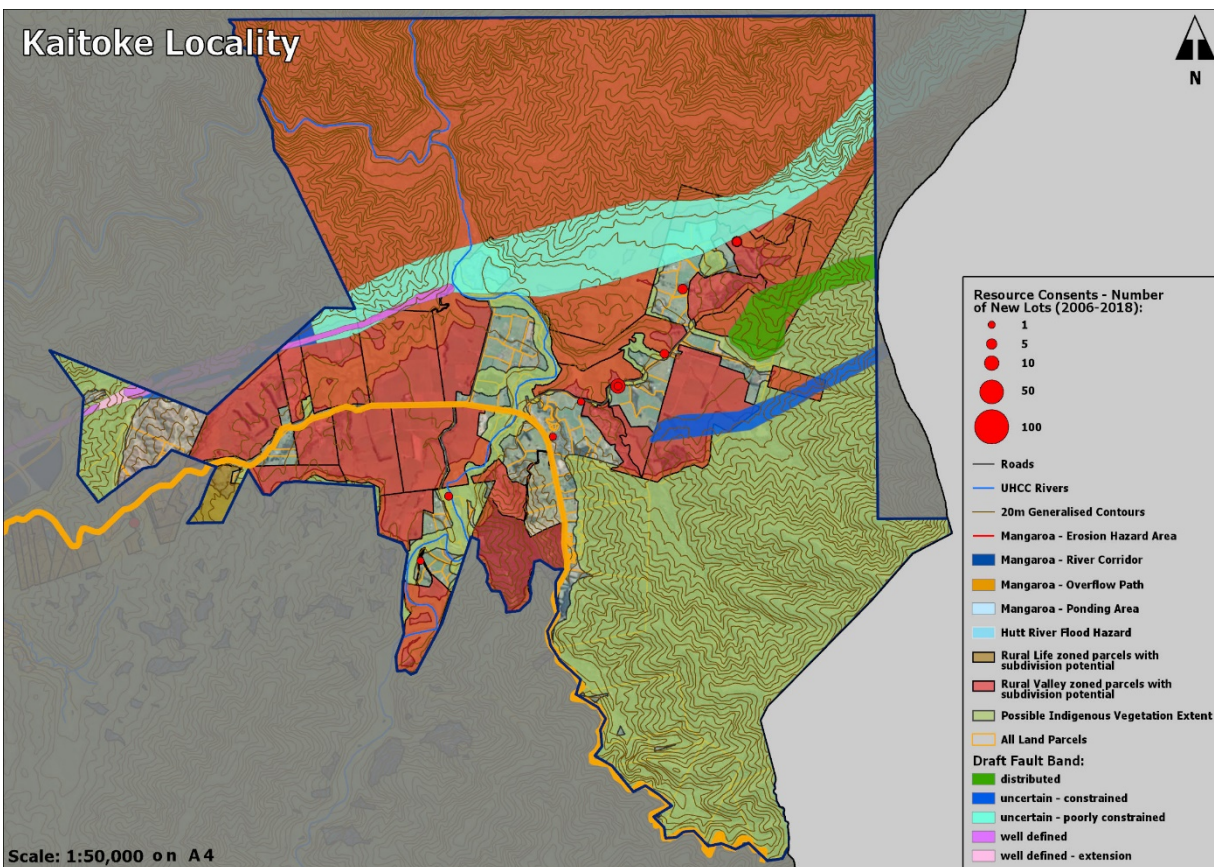
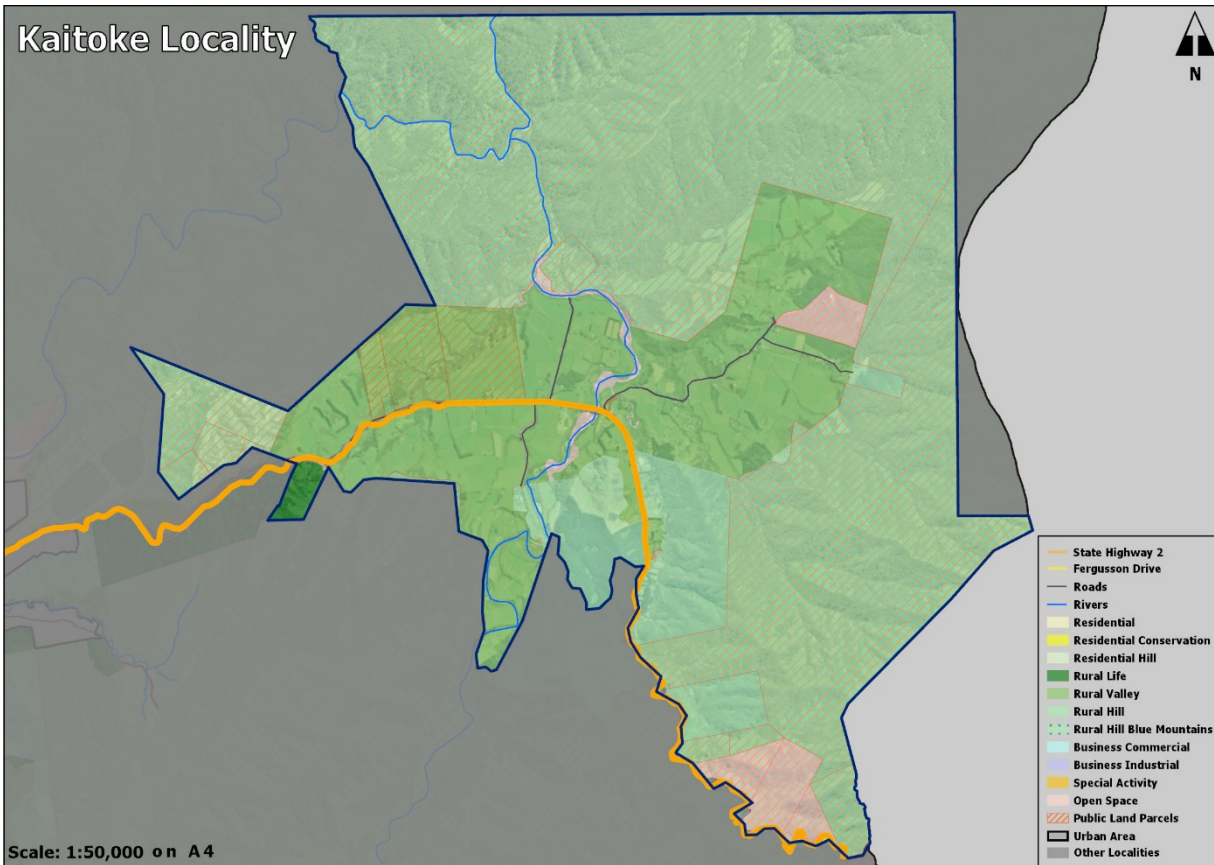
For ease of access in this terrain, development often fronts the road, or has access routes off it, and is often located on narrow sections running up the hillside. The risk of increased ‘apparent density’ is discussed in Section 4.2.2 of this report.

2.6 Kaitoke Valley Locality

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Kaitoke Valley locality is located to the north of Upper Hutt’s urban area. In this report, the focus is on the area extending north from the SH2 intersection with Marchant Road.

This elevated basin area is framed by steeply rising peaks to the north and ‘more gently sloping spurs separating river and stream valleys’ to the south (Boffa Miskell Ltd, 2012 p. 30). Kaitoke Valley is proportionately wider for its area, compared to other local valleys.



Stands of both native and exotic trees serve to divide (or compartmentalise) the valley floor (Boffa Miskell Ltd, 2012, p. 30). These vegetation patterns often follow either the meandering watercourse paths through the landscape, or the more linear boundary lines of paddocks and properties. This vegetation is often well set back from roads, affording public visibility through open areas in the foreground.

There are various recreational opportunities associated with the area and its surrounds, including walking tracks and the YMCA Kaitoke Outdoor Education Centre at the head of the valley.

SENSITIVITY TO DEVELOPMENT

There is a high level of visibility through aspects of this valley area, and to an extent ribbon development already exists. Aerial photography also illustrates this scattered pattern of ribbon development following roads. With this visibility across the valley, the landscape character will change quickly if subdivided and developed. This is evident with a highly visible 10 lot subdivision under development at the time of my site visit (9 April 2019).

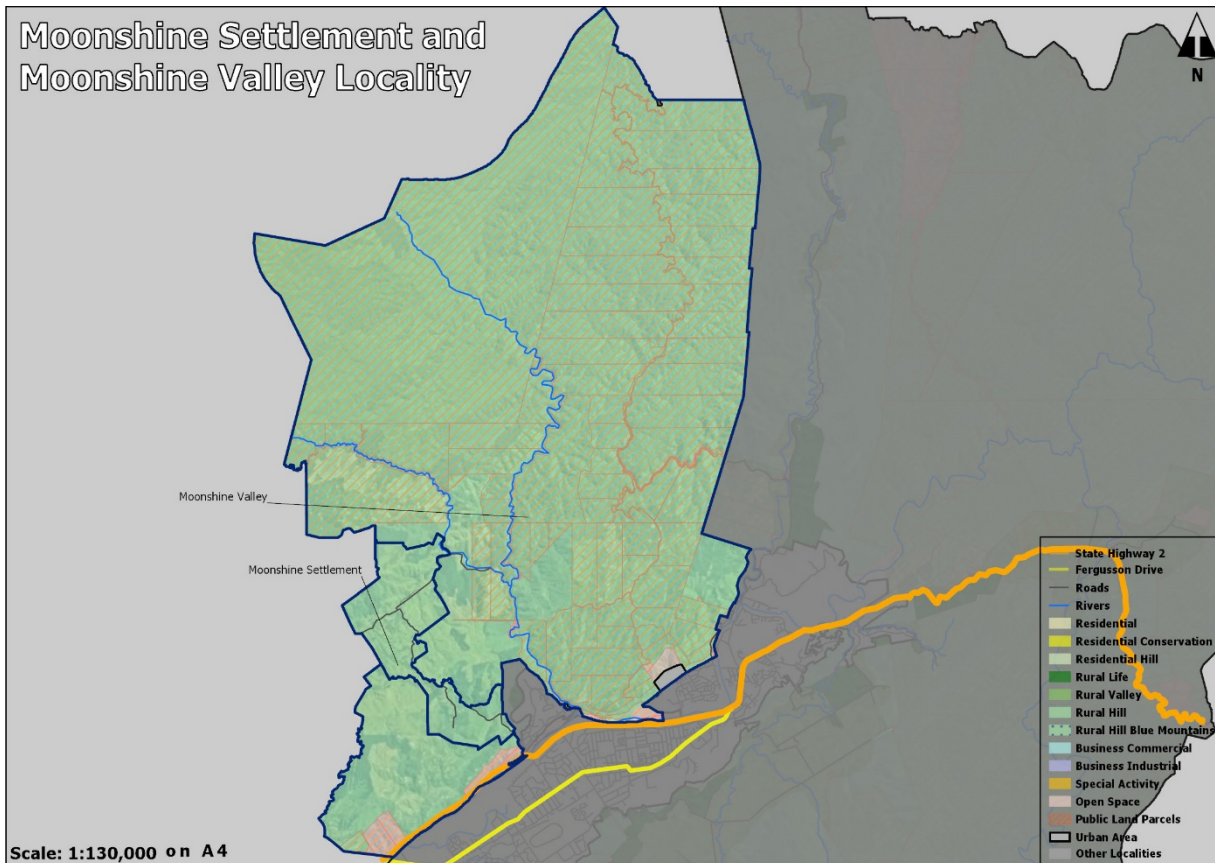


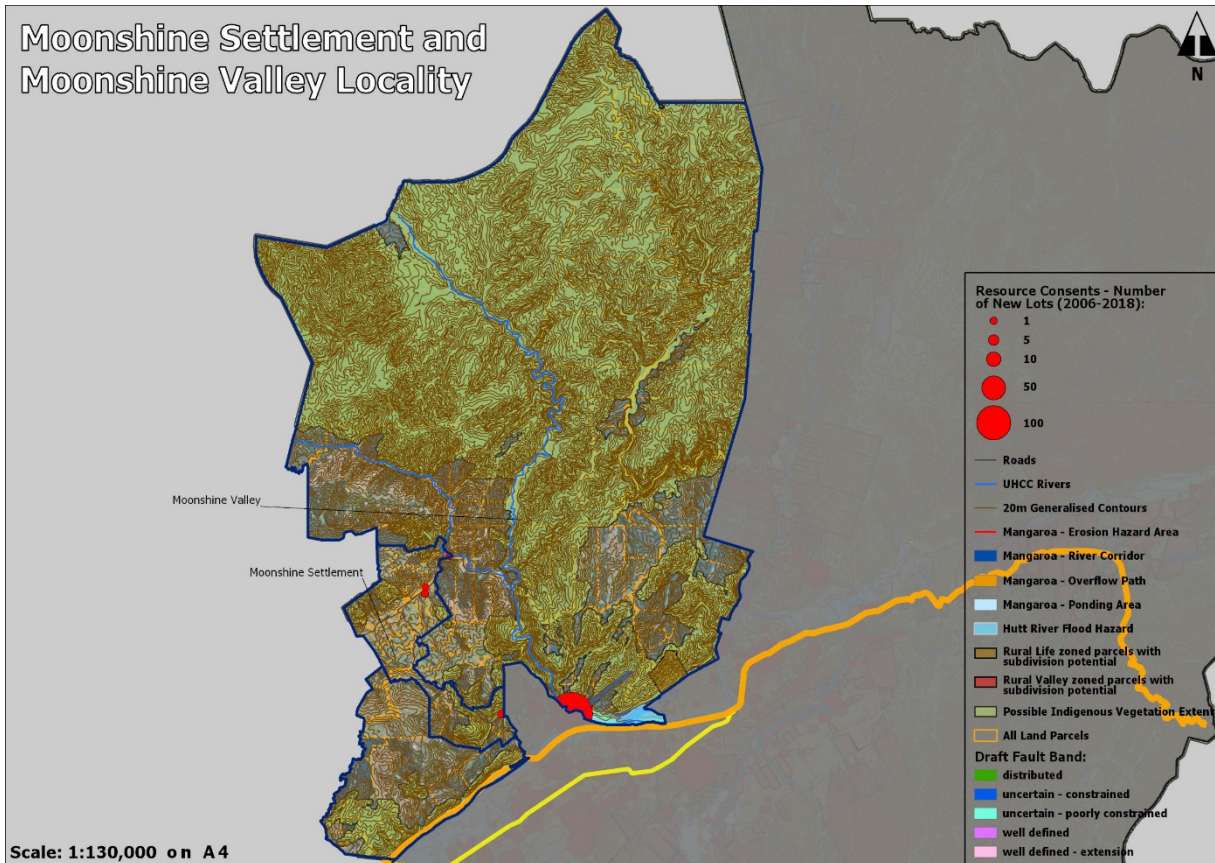
Kaitoke Valley - subdivision development

2.7 Moonshine Valley and Moonshine Settlement Localities

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The settlement of Moonshine Valley is isolated by distance, terrain and almost single-track road access from Upper Hutt's urban area. This settlement area is also located adjacent the district boundary with Porirua City.





The freeze-thaw action associated with the most recent ice age has created a softening effect of the hills in this area, rounding the spurs and filling the gullies, creating a gently undulating landscape. This accommodating setting may have been a factor in the establishment of this otherwise seemingly unexpected development area. There is steeper countryside between the Moonshine settlement and the Hutt Valley.

The built development of the Moonshine settlement is relatively evenly scattered as ribbon development that follows Moonshine Hills Road and Bulls Run Road. Small rural properties and lifestyle blocks of 10ha and less dominate the valley, with larger pastoral farming on the hill country (Boffa Miskell Ltd, 2012, p. 54).

SENSITIVITY TO DEVELOPMENT

The character of this remote and very rural area would be sensitive to any unconsidered approach to increased density of development. Any overtly formal or more urbanised development could be at odds with the existing open and informal rural landscape character.

3 Existing landscape policy framework

The existing policy framework has an important influence on landscape character, informing permitted activities and development proposals, and setting requirements regarding consideration of landscape character and visual amenity.

This section of the report looks at the existing policy framework for managing effects on landscape character and visual amenity in the Upper Hutt rural area.

3.1 Greater Wellington Regional Policy Statement (2013)

The Regional Policy Statement addresses regionally significant natural landscapes and landscape features and requires district councils to identify and protect such landscapes at the district level.

Rural landscapes that are not specifically identified in the RPS are therefore addressed at a district level.

Currently, there are no significant landscape classifications (ONFLs or SALs) within the RLUA rural locality areas. Work is underway to go through the plan change process to recognise significant landscape classification areas within the district plan.

3.2 Upper Hutt Operative District Plan (2004)

The Operative District Plan does not currently identify or protect significant landscapes as ONFLs or SALs. I understand that work to identify such landscapes has been undertaken, and that a plan change will be notified to identify and designate such landscapes.

The Council has undertaken an initial internal review of the existing District Plan objectives and policies in the rural chapter, to inform the proposed rural plan change. The following objectives and policies address landscape and visual amenity matters:

OPERATIVE DISTRICT PLAN - OBJECTIVE/POLICY	MY COMMENTS (FROM A 'LANDSCAPE PERSPECTIVE')
CHAPTER 5. RURAL ZONE	
<p>Objective 5.3.1 The maintenance and enhancement of the open spaces, natural features and ecological systems which comprise the rural character and amenity.</p>	<p>The rural landscape comprises both natural (i.e. indigenous vegetation patterns) and cultural (i.e. agricultural use) elements. The open character and natural processes of the rural landscape are important regarding its appearance and ecological processes.</p>

<p>Policy 5.4.1</p> <p>To manage the adverse environmental effects arising from the scale, density, number and location of earthworks, new building developments and activities so that they do not significantly compromise rural character and landscape values</p>	<p>The landscape values and capacity of the rural landscape are place specific. The effects of applications will differ based on their scope and scale. For these reasons, each application, and its effects on the specific setting, is very distinct.</p>
<p>Policy 5.4.2</p> <p>To ensure that subdivision, development and land use within the Valley Floor and Hill Sub-zones minimise adverse effects on rural character, areas of significant indigenous flora or fauna, and amenity values.</p>	<p>The presence of vegetation contributes to landscape complexity and the ability to provide a visual anchor, and/or screening for development. The natural landscape values associated with the presence of indigenous vegetation is important (in itself) and is often associated with riparian planting and water quality.</p>
<p>Policy 5.4.3</p> <p>To provide for rural lifestyle subdivision which maintains the rural character and amenity values and avoids, remedies or mitigates the effects of natural hazards.</p>	<p>There are examples where these issues can work in parallel. Protecting the open character of valley floors can happen by setting development along the base of slopes, where they can also avoid flooding and liquefaction hazard areas.</p>
<p>Policy 5.4.4</p> <p>To ensure that subdivision, development, and land use within the Rural Hill Sub-zone minimise adverse effects on significant natural, ecological, scenic, visual, landscape, recreational and cultural values.</p>	<p>There are notable sensitivities associated with hill development. These characteristics warrant protection: visually prominent landscapes, ecological areas, and places of highly scenic value. This kind of protection is signalled by the extent of hill areas under consideration for landscape significance classification.</p>
<p>Policy 5.4.5</p> <p>To ensure that activities which alter the contour of the land do not significantly affect rural character and amenity values, particularly where the land is visible from roads and public places.</p>	<p>Earthworks can literally look like a scar on the landscape, highlighting the location, access and scale of development areas. This issue can come to the fore with hillside development. Earthworks is a key matter in assessing the landscape and visual effects of development.</p>
<p>Objective 5.3.3</p> <p>To maintain and enhance the amenity values of the rural area.</p>	<p>Rural amenity is derived from the characteristics and values associated with the rural landscape. Development that is out of character will affect the cohesion,</p>

	<p>'pleasantness' and visual amenity of the rural landscape². I note the 'enhancement' aspect of this objective as something to bring forward to matters of discretion.</p>
<p>Policy 5.4.12 To encourage building design, location and scale that complements the character of the surrounding area.</p>	<p>Please refer to Section 5.1 'Built Form Design Controls and Landscape Mitigation' of this report.</p>
<p>CHAPTER 9. SUBDIVISION AND EARTHWORKS</p>	
<p>Objective 9.3.1 The promotion of subdivision and development that is appropriate to the natural characteristics, landforms, and visual amenity of the City, significant areas of indigenous vegetation and habitats of indigenous fauna, is consistent with the sustainable use of land, and has regard for walking, cycling and public transport.</p>	<p>This objective speaks to effects and outcomes for both people and place. Development is truly sustainable when it effectively addresses outcomes for biodiversity, landscape values and community.</p>
<p>Policy 9.4.3 To promote a sustainable pattern of subdivision and development that protects environmental values and systems, protects the potential of resources, and has regard for walking, cycling, public transport and transportation networks.</p>	<p>Sustainable subdivision practice should involve shared paths (and green and blue networks) as well as good road connectivity. This benefits of this are multifaceted including provision for active recreation, reduced isolation and private vehicle dependency.</p>

² 'Landscape amenity is the natural and physical quality and character of an area (landscape) that contributes to people's appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence, and cultural and recreational attributes' (RMA, 1991).

The Council's internal review recognised that there needs to be more direct connection between the objectives, policies and methods (rules) to address these matters. I agree that there is scope to provide more landscape responsive and directive policy guidance, as well as rules and assessment matters. This would provide a better framework to weigh up an application with relevant qualitative assessment matters. Matters covered may include considering if built form design and landscape treatment are enough to address visual prominence/landscape sensitivity. Alternatively, a proposed building location may simply remain unsuitable despite these factors.

THE SOUTHERN HILLS OVERLAY

The 'Southern Hills Overlay Area' in the Operative District Plan is an area to be managed for landscape values in the Eastern Hutt Hills (Isthmus Group Ltd, 2017, p. 36) and is unique as a recognised landscape character area specifically provided for in the District Plan. The overlay area affords subdivision discretionary activity status. This is in contrast with the rest of the rural zone where subdivision at a minimum lot size is a controlled activity.

4 Lessons learnt from existing rural development patterns

To help inform decisions about what type and density of development might be appropriate in the Upper Hutt rural environment (from a landscape perspective), it is useful to look at existing examples that demonstrate an appropriate response to landscape character and visual amenity, and to look at examples that do not achieve this.

This section of the report looks at existing built development patterns in the rural environment and how these can potentially inform a new planning framework for rural landscapes.

4.1 What's working well

The **Katherine Mansfield Drive** development pattern, within the Mangaroa Valley locality, is an example of rural development that is well located and laid out. In places the development pattern provides a picturesque setting because:

- Overall, there is a contained development pattern along the base of the hills to the east of the valley. The landscape complexity of this area has the capacity to absorb development, and development has generally avoided the prominent and more exposed, elevated locations.
- With residential development being tucked into the hillside, the more open, working rural landscape of the remainder of the valley floor is retained
- At a more localised level, the combination of topographical variation and established treed vegetation patterns contribute to the discrete location of a numbers of the houses, many of which are partially to fully obscured from public view. The cut and fill of the road alignment contributes to this effect.

Design positives

- The allotment layouts are often accessed off shared driveways (a spider web or fingered type pattern). This decreases the apparent level of visibility from the road. Back sections are often staggered and somewhat obscured behind the established and mature vegetation (and/or dwellings) of front lots.
- The section sizes (and shapes) provide for offsetting space to be retained between dwellings; this is a key contributor in retaining the 'dominance of space over built form'.



Katherine Mansfield Drive - development pattern avoiding the valley floor and more elevated slopes



Katherine Mansfield Drive - development 'tucked into' lower slopes



Katherine Mansfield Drive - shared driveways and discrete development patterns

Other existing examples of landscape sensitive development include:

- Traditional crossroads and Maclaren Street clustering in **Maymorn and Mangaroa Areas**. Small settlements at intersections are an identifiable and somewhat anticipated traditional development pattern scattered through the rural landscape. This pattern is inherently positive, as it is easily located and well connected with existing transport routes.
- Discrete development patterns through **Akatarawa Valley**, above Akatarawa Road. These seem 'nestled into the landscape' and are often not visible from Akatarawa Road. As seen from aerial photos they are often clustered together.
- Along the east side of Colletts Road (through **Maymorn and Mangaroa**, and to the east of the valley), development also sits against the base of adjacent hills, set back from the open valley floor. This shows a sensitive and discrete development pattern, whereby a rural residential area is 'well sited in a landscape setting' - discreetly located at the meeting point between the two landform types (valley floor and hill slopes).

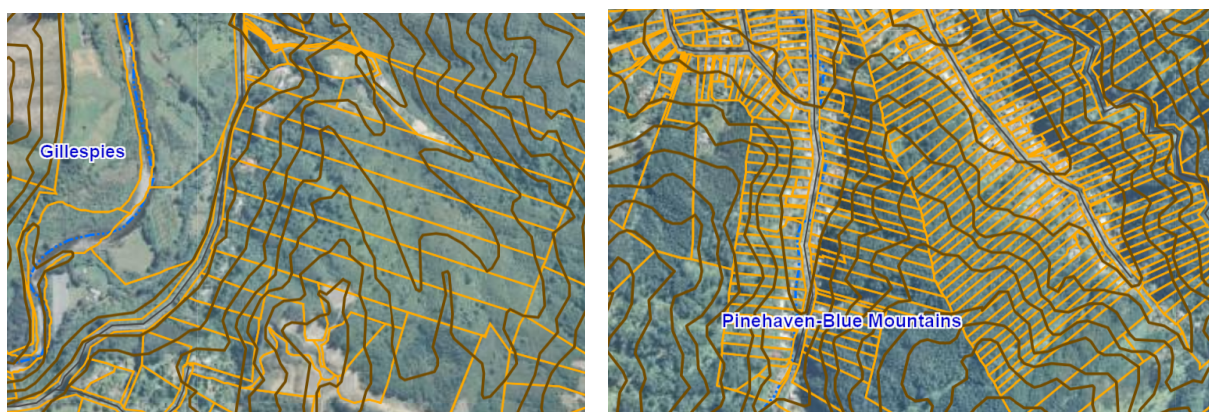
4.2 What is not working so well

It is also important to understand what developments have not worked well (and why). This section is a starting point for considering appropriate future development responses to landscape sensitivity.

HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT

A common feature of hillside development is that dwellings front the road to provide practical access, rather than as a response to the terrain. This can amplify the 'apparent density' of the setting, creating a much more urbanising character than may be anticipated when considering only the size of the allotments.

Another common pattern of hillside development is orienting narrow, rectangular allotments perpendicular to ridges. This is evident through areas like **Akatarawa Valley**, **Gillespies**, **Wallaceville**, and **Whitemans Valley**.

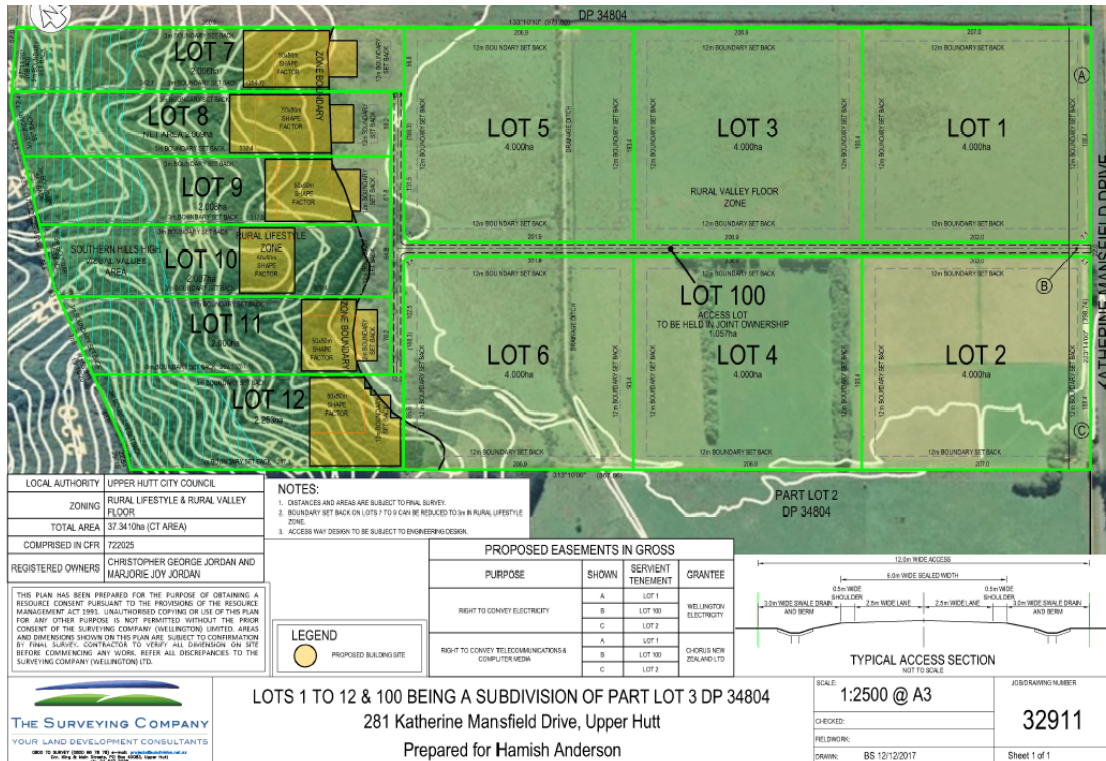


In some areas the landform patterns and vegetation obscure this development pattern. However, in more visible or prominent locations, this pattern can again give the appearance of a higher development density. This happens when dwellings are situated both close to each other and close to the road, with most of the long, narrow lot extending behind a dwelling. At greater densities this has the potential to have an adverse effect on landscape character. Any change in land cover, i.e. vegetation cover or its maintenance between adjacent properties, can highlight the long, straight, shared boundary alignment.

The South Mangaroa consent example illustrates a response to the **Wallaceville Swamp's** peat soil conditions in the valley floor (which are less suitable for building on), favouring denser allotments on the hillslopes.

While lower hillslope development can provide positive landscape outcomes, the layout design needs to be responsive to the local situation. Regular building platform locations, each with their own separate vehicle access, can create a very repetitive development pattern (akin to urban terrace housing).

Houses simply arranged 'in a row', can lack individual building platform placement consideration and their geometric arrangement also serves to highlight their development pattern. The separate building platforms will each need consideration of more sensitive cut, fill and alignment.



South Mangaroa - subdivision (281 Katherine Mansfield Drive)

Building platforms located on localised spurs may afford expansive landscape views for the inhabitants. However, the views back from the valley floor toward potential dwellings on these platforms can give the perception of quite prominent development. The cumulation of a group of poorly located houses on a hillside will (incrementally) detract from the rural landscape characteristics and qualities of the setting. This can be an avoidable outcome.



South Whitemans Valley - 'scattered' development pattern across the valley floor area

4.3 Community values associated with the rural Upper Hutt landscape

The rural Upper Hutt landscape can be perceived as a restful and restorative environment. While the 'working' nature of Upper Hutt's rural landscape is changing, the characteristics associated with traditional farming land uses are sought by those purchasing rural lifestyle properties.

Existing community consultation feedback referred to here draws upon responses from rural residents in the LUS feedback, feedback captured during the Council's LTP process and a 2019 councillor workshop.

Consultation feedback identified the contribution of 'quietness and naturalness' and agricultural activity to rural character. An inherent sense of spaciousness and low-density development were also recognised. To protect these values, the need for formal protection was acknowledged, both with regards to rural amenity and ecology.

5 Recommendations for managing Upper Hutt's future rural development

Rural character still exists in much of the Upper Hutt rural area, as open space dominates over built form. However, the ability to protect rural character becomes more difficult as density increases. With increasing density, there will also be a need for sensitive and place-responsive management of development.

In the rural environment, more 'landscape responsive' character and amenity outcomes are easier to achieve when built development is sparse, and when more 'offsetting space' is retained around dwellings.

If the Council wishes to accommodate the demand for people moving into Upper Hutt's rural areas in search of a commutable rural lifestyle, a balancing act will need to be achieved between the following matters:

- **Rural character** - The characteristic of open (vegetated) space dominating over built form, and an informal character (often associated with productive land use)
- **Desirable allotment sizes** - Previous community consultation indicates that there is market preference for lifestyle properties smaller than 4ha in size (as larger properties are more difficult to maintain)
- **Good connectivity** - Rural communities that are well laid out and well connected both internally and with their wider location

The open space characteristics of the existing rural character are the starting point for understanding the landscape's capacity for, and sensitivity to, development. It is also important to consider how to provide for future development that works well for the receiving community – the people that are already living there.

Increased subdivision and smaller allotment sizes will incrementally change the spatial characteristics of the rural environment. There can be a tension, or balancing act, in providing for increased rural subdivision that also allows a landscape to retain rural character. This section contains several aspects that I consider are central to the management of future development in Upper Hutt's rural environment.

5.1 Built form design controls and landscape mitigation

Adverse effects on landscape character may arise from prominent buildings (by design and/or location) through to more formal landscape treatment. The negative effect of these issues on rural character increases with the density of development patterns.

There are some place-specific considerations for Upper Hutt's sub-valleys identified in the 'rural localities' in this report (see section 5.4 'A response to place').

Broad design considerations outlined below can be interpreted and applied across the rural environment. An effective 'design-led' response will always be specific to a site and its landscape setting.

The important point here is the need for a robust approach, going further than simply screening a building behind vegetation.

Design measures at all levels of design development (broad scale through to detail), can help a dwelling sit more sympathetically in a rural context, and even effectively contribute to informal rural character. Good design is a critical way to achieve 'open space dominating over built form'.

A COMPREHENSIVE DESIGN MITIGATION APPROACH

I suggest the following three-pronged approach to provide effective design and landscape mitigation. These three components must be comprehensive enough to ensure that a proposed development responds appropriately to the sensitivity and capacity of the local landscape:

- **Building design** - To help 'visually break up' the built form, such as use of recessive colour and lower reflectivity, appropriate scale, architectural modulation, including the use of secondary exterior cladding materials.
- **Responsive building siting** - Considering 'sitting into' rather than 'perching on' hillsides, avoiding more prominent locations, or providing sufficient setbacks.
- **Landscape planting** - In some areas, like in surroundings of indigenous vegetation, this may require predominant or exclusive use of native planting and recognition of natural vegetation patterns (i.e. not putting a few trees in front of a building on a spur, but extending informal existing gully patterns to soften the appearance of built development). Planting should not to be used as the sole mitigation factor, and it should not be overtly formal or urbanising in character.



Maymorn - a more 'manicured' rural property example

The combination of various scales can make the rural environment appear more urbanised in character. Less appropriate development approaches may incrementally undermine the associated open space and informal characteristics of Upper Hutt's rural environment.

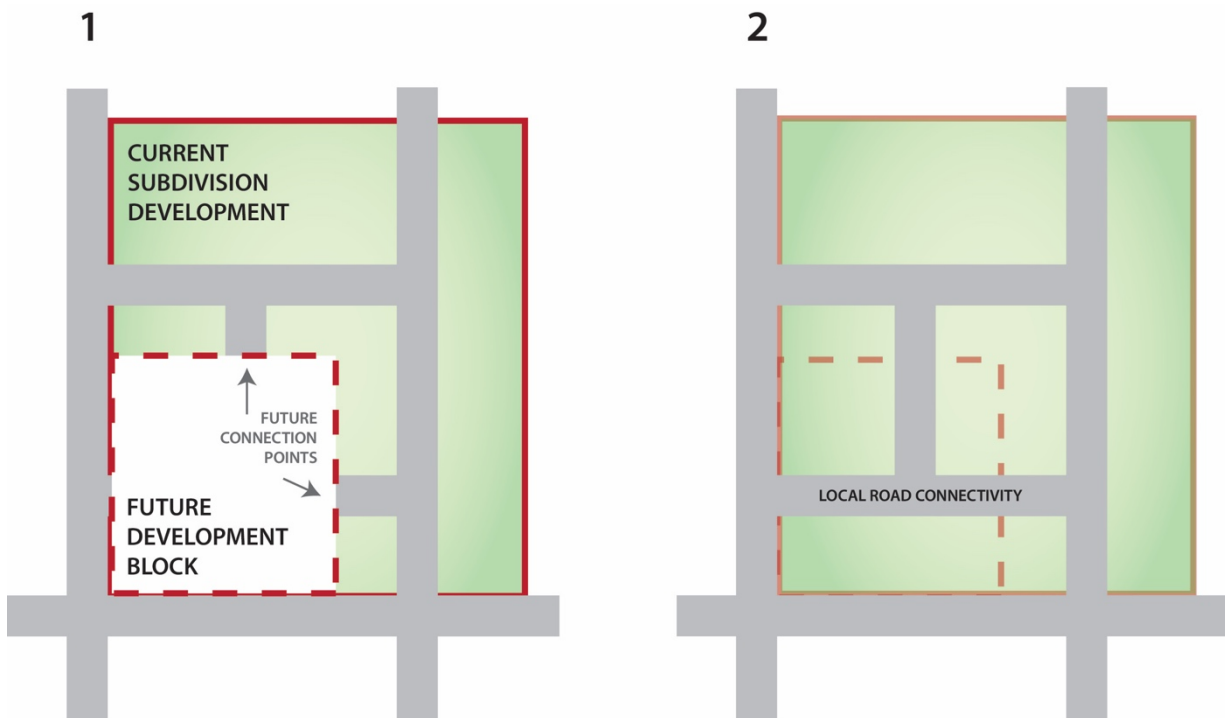
HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT - SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

For hillside development, there are opportunities to achieve an outlook for inhabitants, while simultaneously reducing a development's visual prominence for onlookers. More sensitive building platform locations typically afford greater shelter too. The combination of the following factors make hillside development more appropriate in a given landscape setting:

- More landscape responsive boundary alignment (i.e. following gullies or other landform patterns)
- Building platform controls
- Discrete (and shared) driveway alignment will help development 'sit into' hill site locations rather than more prominently 'perch on' their landscape setting.

5.2 Providing for well-connected rural neighbourhoods

When individual subdivisions are designed and developed in isolation, access routes will typically enter and exit the development via new roads or rights-of-way branching off existing roads, unless there are planning requirements to provide connectivity to adjacent properties (that may be developed in the future).



Well connected neighbourhoods

STRUCTURE PLANS

Without the guidance of structure plans to set out these requirements, there is a risk of areas being disconnected, human movement inefficiencies, and overtly vehicle-dependant neighbourhoods (i.e. no shared path links to nearby neighbours, just less direct vehicle routes).

Having an area's overall end development outcome in mind is key for a well-connected community. To appropriately manage increased density and incremental change, the future shared spaces and access will need to be planned for and protected ahead.

Structure plans can be prioritised where development pressure is greater and/or for future growth priority areas have been identified by the Council. Future proofing structure plan areas will involve provision for:

- Effective open space networks
- Multimodal connectivity (including links to neighbouring properties, and pre-empting future development)
- Areas of different density

- Specific views to be protected
- Other place responsive factors

Future landscape overlay areas may also be appropriate where key landscape values come to the fore. For example, it might be appropriate to identify a 'buffer area' adjacent to a SNA or ONL area where native planting requirements are prescribed.

5.3 Incorporating landscape values into the District Plan

To reduce potential adverse effects for the receiving community and to better address the landscape character and amenity, a multi-faceted management approach is required. The following recommendations identify opportunities to consider landscape values in a planning context.

CLEAR OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

Objectives and policies should be drafted to be directive and clear about the landscape character outcomes. Where rural localities are specifically sensitive to development, the policies should be very directive to give decision-makers clear guidance on the appropriate outcomes and to provide a robust basis for declining applications for inappropriate development. For example, Whitemans Valley landscape values (particularly indigenous vegetation cover) should be a focus for planning discretion.

BRING LANDSCAPE VALUES THROUGH TO RULES AND ASSESSMENT MATTERS

There is scope to translate landscape character and visual amenity direction (from objectives and policies) to development regulation in rules and assessment matters. This may include permitted or controlled activity standards, i.e. things like cladding colour and building locations.

CLEAR CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS (IDENTIFYING LANDSCAPE VALUES)

Consider including a clear character description in the District Plan for areas where specific outcomes are needed. These character descriptions can provide a helpful reference point for applicants designing developments and for decision-makers. Coupled with design guides and directional policies, character descriptions provide transparency for the community and plan users.

INTEGRATE DESIGN GUIDES

Any design guides provided should integrate well with (revised) anticipated environmental outcomes, and assessment matters in the district plan.

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Landscape sensitivity can be quite high in areas with proximity to ONFL areas, highly visible landscape areas, or ecologically sensitive landscapes. Consider the appropriate development threshold level that would trigger matters of discretion in these situations. The factors that

contributed to significant landscape area classifications can inform and help identify a relevant threshold.

Some specific approaches such as a matrix assessment for hillside development may be helpful, i.e. considering matters such as:

- Elevation
- Proximity to a ridgeline
- Other factors contributing to visual prominence (i.e. scale, design, spur location)
- Volume of earthworks
- Height above natural ground level
- Boundary lines following the landscape (i.e. off ridgelines and spurs to follow gully patterns).

EXPERT ASSESSMENT

Rural development resource consent applications (which trigger thresholds of landscape capacity or sensitivity) should be supported by expert landscape and visual assessments and tested by peer reviews. This will be most effective where planning discretion formalises the protection of rural landscape values. It is important to assess and confirm that the drawing sets provided with a proposed development will deliver appropriate outcomes, confirming the positive outcomes put forward by an applicant's AEE.

5.3.1 Landscape Responsive Planning

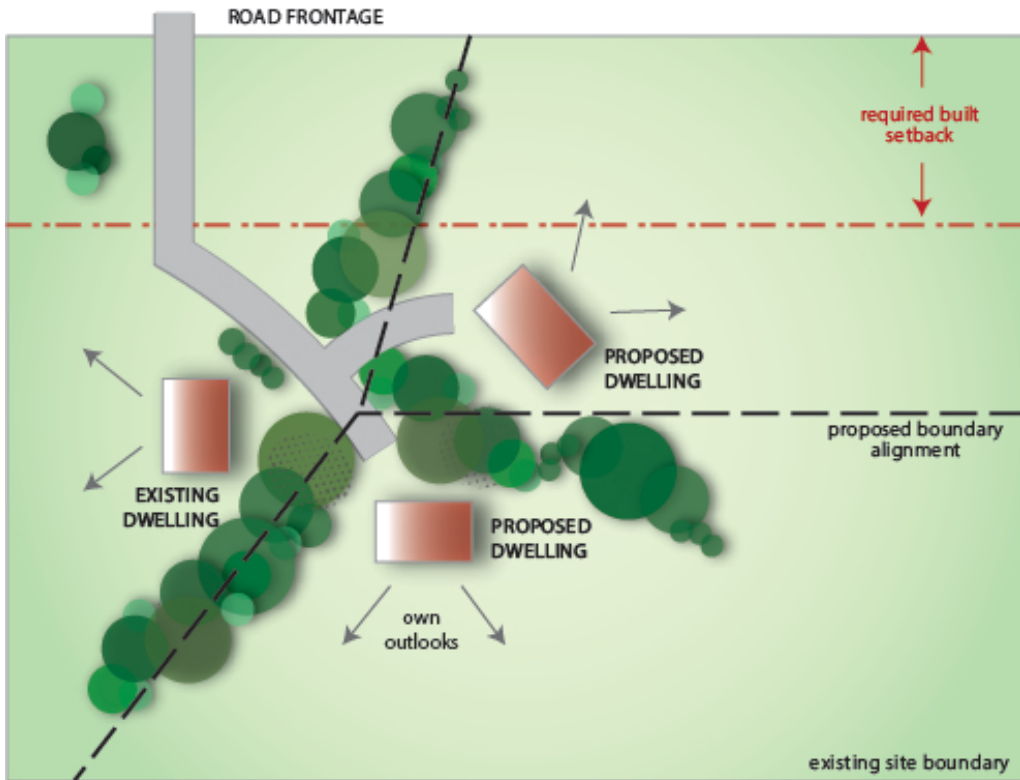
There are effective strategic and/or spatial development approaches which can help provide an appropriate response to landscape impacts of rural development pressure.

To better retain rural character, it could be more appropriate to approach development as **cluster areas** or **settlements** (i.e. traditional crossroads development, or nodes) that are distinguishable from the wider rural setting.

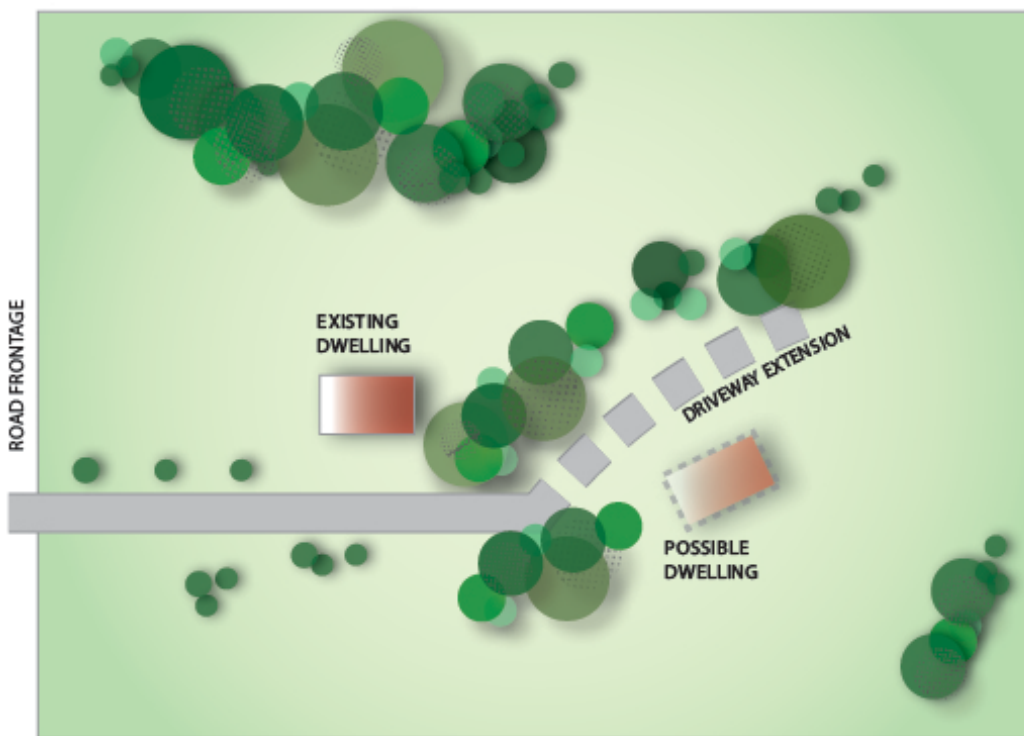
CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT

Within an individual subdivision site, cluster development for rural lifestyle blocks can soften the effects of intensification on public views. This example utilises informal vegetation patterns for screening and to provide a visual anchor, or backdrop. It would be anticipated that once vegetation is established, all three buildings would not be visible together from any one point in the surrounding location.

Cluster development can help retain 'balance land' for productive use, retaining rural character; along with the open space nature of the rural landscape.



Sympathetic subdivision approach; Clustering buildings together



Potential shadow building platform

SHADOW DEVELOPMENT

Shadow building platforms/areas involve identifying a future 'shadow' building platform or area, and access arrangements within a single lot.

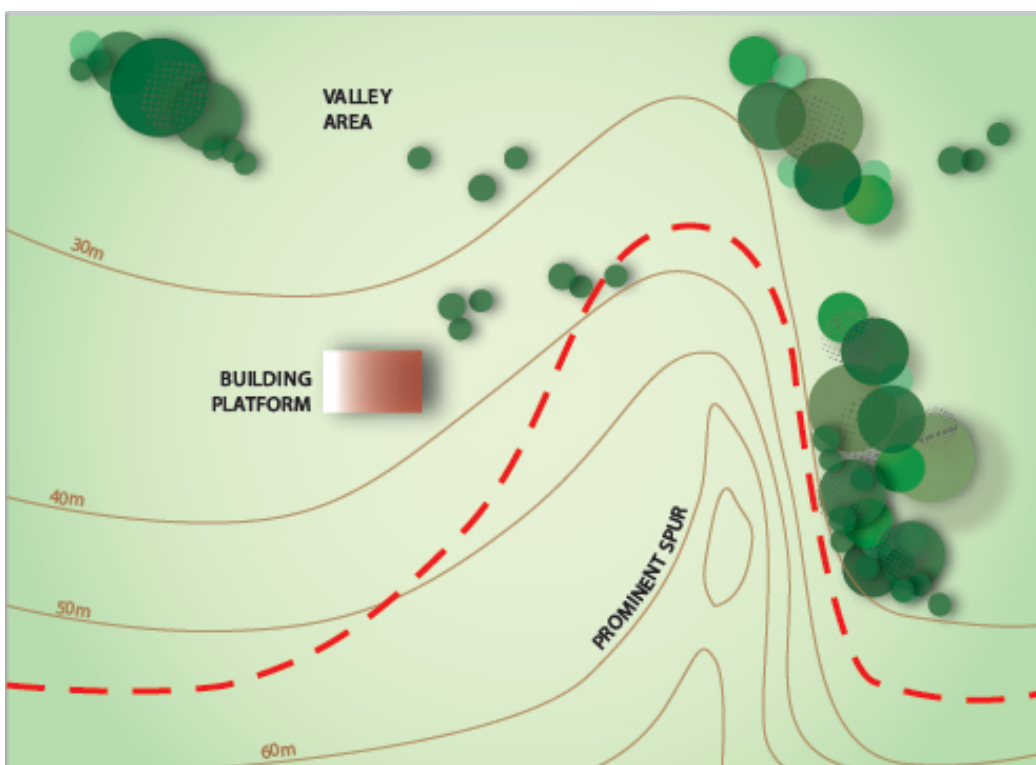
In locations where infill development is seen as more appropriate way to meet future demand, this mechanism provides an opportunity to reduce future sprawl.

Places suitable for this approach will involve areas where development is only appropriate within a defined area, i.e. due to a more sensitive landscape context.

A 'shadow' development approach relies on a sensitive overall site layout. The potential later infill development would also need to be sensitively sited and developed in response to the surrounding landscape character and amenity.

Pre-emptive site design prevents the unintended preclusion of sufficient space or access. As an option, bulk and location controls may provide a defined shadow building area (rather than specific platform location). Any alternative locations sought for an approved shadow building platform within a site would need to be assessed on their own merits.

This opportunity to accommodate future intensification could be a consideration where initial lots proposed are larger than the minimum lot size. It may be appropriate, for example, for lots to be between 1000m² - 4ha in area.



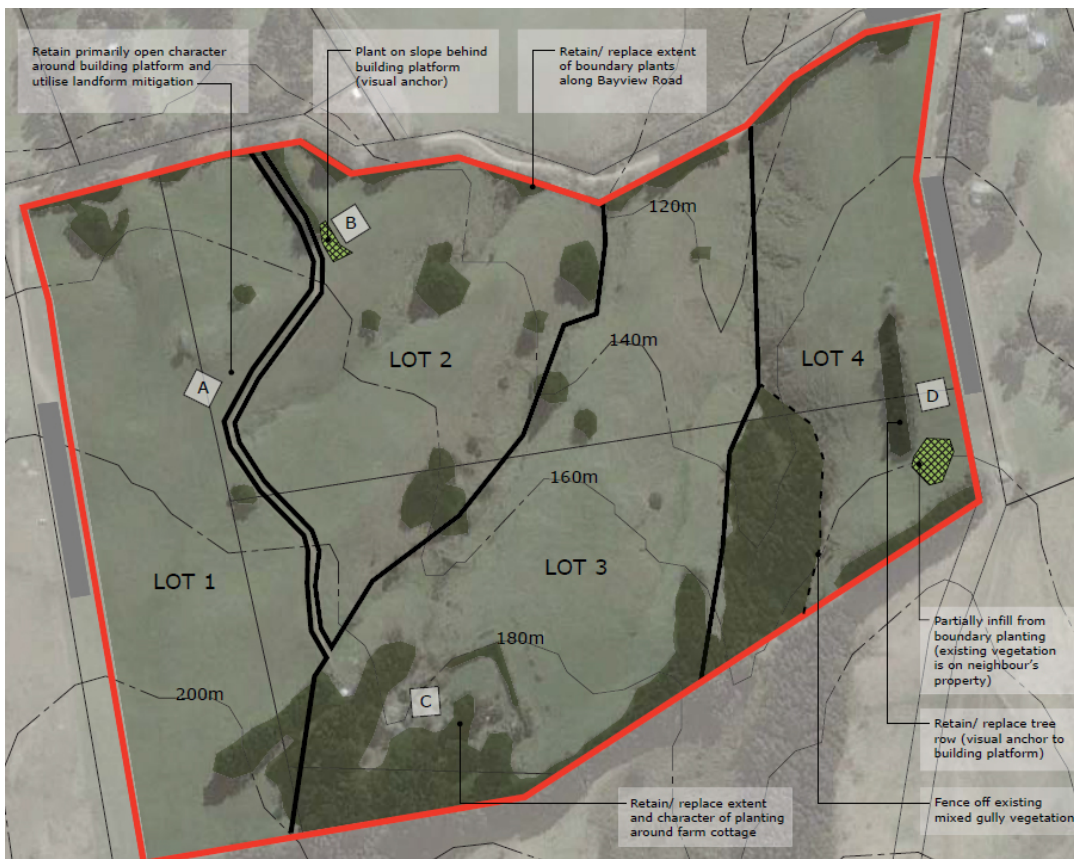
Potential landscape responsive zone boundary

LANDSCAPE RESPONSIVE ZONE BOUNDARIES

Landscape responsive zone boundaries involves realigning zoning boundaries to recognise landscape sensitivity thresholds. For example, rather than a zone edge following the ridgeline along hill tops, it may avoid elevated areas and prominent locations such as ridgelines or spurs.

Landscape sensitive allotment boundaries provide a similar approach to landscape responsive zone boundaries, at the scale of individual allotments. In sensitive landscape areas, such as some hillside locations, boundaries can be emphasised by shelterbelt planting or change in land cover. It may be more appropriate to align boundaries to follow gullies instead of more prominent spurs or ridgelines.

As a mitigation measure, opportunities should be taken through subdivision applications to reduce the at-boundary effects associated with simple geometric allotment shapes. The plan below illustrates an example of this development approach, along with sensitive building platform locations and other measures (Banks Peninsular, Canterbury).



5.4 A response to place

The combined attributes or qualities of an area or landscape setting (natural or cultural) create a landscape that is distinguishable from other places.

Design responses based on the qualities of a place are said to reference the 'genius loci' (genius of place). A sensitive development approach will also be responsive to landscape values and be informed by local development patterns.

The following recommendations draw on the 'genius loci' of the individual rural localities.

TE MARUA (MAYMORN)

Maymorn has been identified by the Council as an area which is strategically located for future growth. However, the full adoption of the urbanising Maymorn Structure Plan (Beca, 2011) in one step would involve an immediate shift from rural to suburban landscape character. This is due to the broad intensification of Maymorn proposed by the structure plan.

This northern area of the valley has some more 'developed' characteristics than the other rural localities. Key cultural landscape features of Maymorn include the rail station, the historic Maclaren Street development and the proposed future urban growth area.

While subdivision capacity is largely taken up here under the Operative District Plan provisions, the current area of Rural Lifestyle zoning allowing subdivision down to 1ha (west of Parkes Line Road) does not reflect the rural open space amenity associated with the Mangaroa River corridor. From the west end of Maclaren Street, the picturesque and scenic outlook over the river corridor is evident (as illustrated by the photograph in Section 2.1 'Te Marua (Maymorn)'). Zoning here appears to be a more arbitrary block to the west half of the Maymorn floor, possibly in consideration of this aspect's proximity to urban areas.

There are, however, still opportunities for the landscape to accommodate higher density rural-residential development. There may be opportunities to further develop:

- Around the rail station and opposite the proposed growth area
- In the area around Old School Road and Collets Road. This would be similar to the 'valley edge' Katherine Mansfield Drive development pattern (see section 4.1 of this report).
- A 'buffer area' for the rural landscape of larger lots to the north of the existing Maclaren Street settlement.

This intensification would largely be away from the central valley area and from public views on Parkes Line Road. This would also set up opportunities for local shared path links (as identified in the 'Upper Valley Horse Trail' proposals, Calibre 2015), through to Mangaroa School and other possible settlement and cluster areas to the south.

I recommend development approach which does not preclude later appropriate intensification of this area. Putting forward a more staged development approach to the community would offer something more responsive to the existing rural character (a shared local value) than the

previous structure plan. Given the pre-existing focus on Maymorn, a more detailed and indicative case study on the area is provided as **Appendix 1** to this report, outlining some preliminary spatial ideas.

MANGAROA VALLEY

Given its proximity to urban Upper Hutt, Mangaroa Valley has also come under a high level of rural lifestyle development pressure. However, this rural locality also has limited further development capacity under the Operative Plan rules.

In response to separate private plan change applications through the area, a strategic approach to set up provision for future public connectivity and spaces is recommended (as expanded on in section 5.2 'Providing for well-connected rural neighbourhoods' of this report). This includes provision for shared paths and local roads between adjacent properties for subdivision, including for both current and future development.

This would not inherently preclude development but require a 'landscape responsive approach' (explained further in section 5.3 'Incorporating landscape values into the district plan' of this report). This is to reduce the potential landscape and visual effects of future development, i.e. visually prominent or otherwise out of character with its surrounds.

I recommend a future development approach based on the traditional crossroad-type cluster development through locations in Maymorn and Mangaroa. This would require visual thresholds so that individual clusters don't bleed into one another, with the unintended outcome of weakening rural character.

It could be appropriate to allow for a cluster area to be further developed in the vicinity of Mangaroa School (Flux Road). This also illustrates the need to provide planning mechanisms which enable cluster development.

WHITEMANS VALLEY

This large area affords notably different lifestyle and connectivity at either end. The sunnier eastern aspect to the northern end of Whitemans Valley may be an appropriate location to accommodate further subdivision and growth, if an appropriate development standard can be achieved in this area. This is both due to the location's advantageous solar gain and its proximity to urban areas (and its close proximity to the Katherine Mansfield area). There is also very little potential SNA cover here.



North Whitemans Valley - eastern facing 'basin' area

Consideration should be given to the distinct matters of the different northern, middle, and southern areas through Whitemans Valley.

Through the middle of Whitemans Valley, any development opportunities might be considered for the areas which avoid:

- Prominent development,
- Hazards
- Significant indigenous vegetation areas (where present)
- The distance to urban areas from parts of the valley

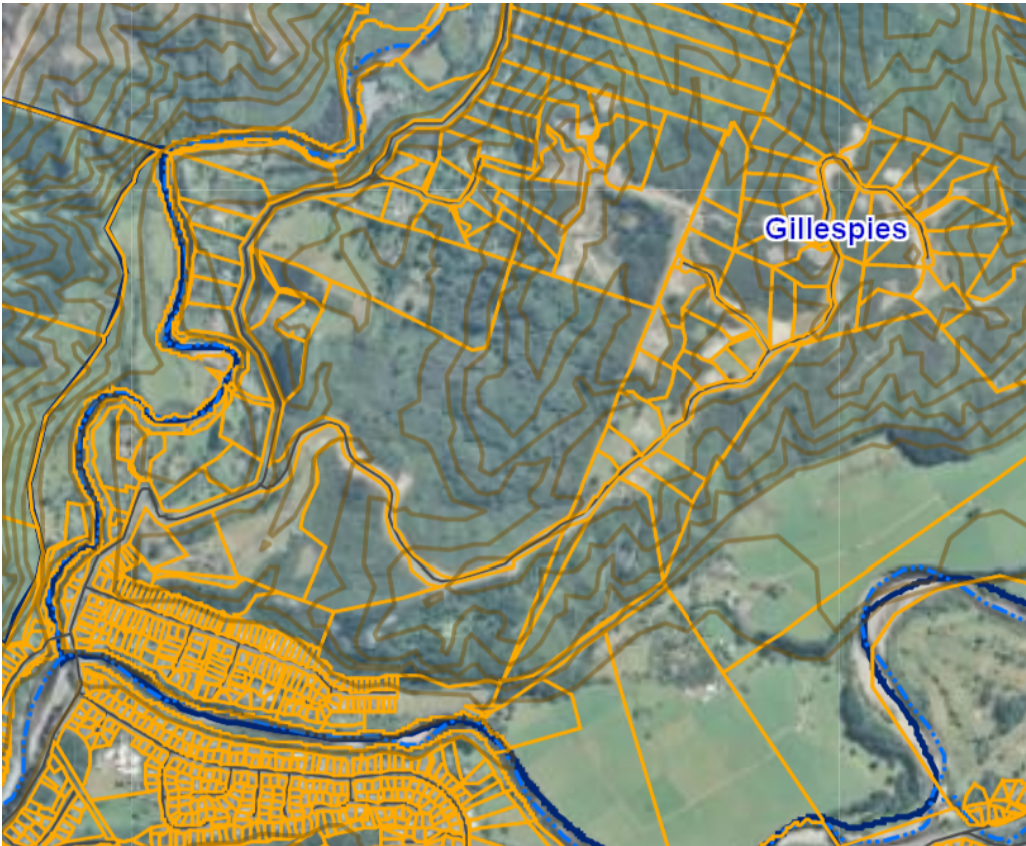
Any proposals to remove indigenous vegetation cover (which is a key landscape value here) would be a key factor in weighing up their appropriateness.

To the south there is an existing shift towards a peppered or evenly dispersed pattern of lifestyle development. Any future growth should be sensitively designed and sited to avoid exacerbating this more visible development pattern trend.

GILLESPIES AND AKATARAWA VALLEY

Much of the Gillespies locality is subject to urban zoning and formally outside the scope of the RLUA. However, the issue of the urban boundary (refer to section 4.2 'What is not working so well' of this report), could be addressed by utilising shadow building platforms or areas (explained in section 5.3 'Incorporating landscape values into the District Plan' of this report) or other mechanisms as a way to stage development. This would be more likely to provide a sensitive outcome for the receiving community. This recommendation is made in consideration of

the current pattern of development and the current planning provisions (permitting denser urban development).



Gillespies Locality - Area of larger lot development (though subject to urban zoning)

Future hillside development through Gillespies and Akatarawa Valley which triggers the need for a resource consent, would warrant site specific landscape and visual assessment (and design input) to address potential adverse effects. Assessment matters should comprehensively address:

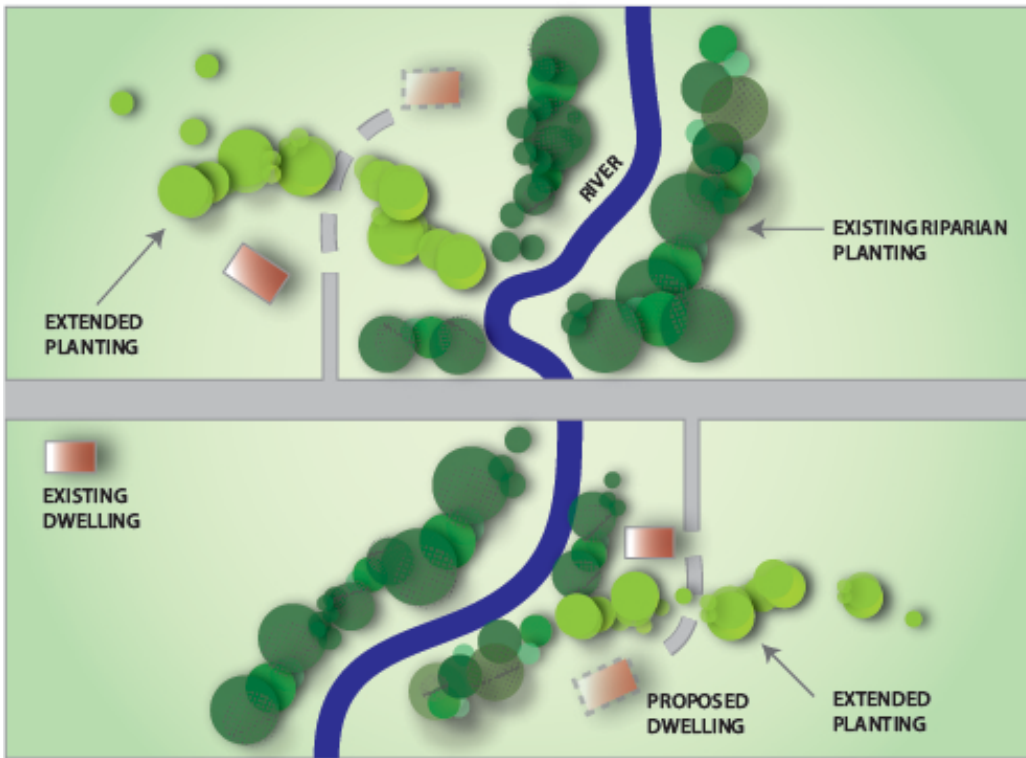
- A palette of design mitigation measures (addressing building location, built form design controls and landscape mitigation)
- Planning standards, which reflect landscape values associated with the draft ONFLS and SAL areas framing this locality
- The extent of vegetation clearing for development which can require management through this area.

KAITOKE

There is existing capacity for further development in this locality under the Operative District Plan (Rural Valley Floor sub-zone).

It would be better if future development could avoid continuing the trend of scattered 'ribbon development' along roads through the valley. A more sensitive development approach may be clustering dwellings to retain larger areas of open balance land. Carefully sited building clusters

would be an appropriate response. There may also be opportunities to extend existing native vegetation patterns as a form of mitigation. This could be approached as design guidance and/or a future assessment matter.



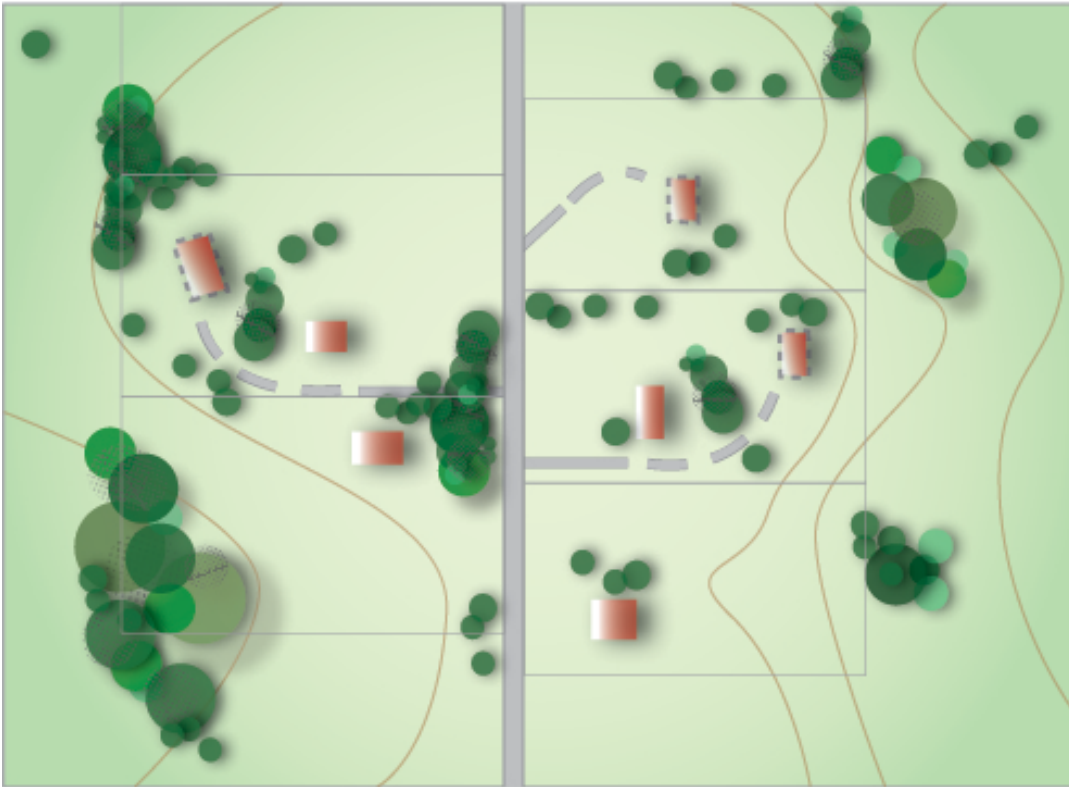
Kaitoke Valley

MOONSHINE VALLEY AND MOONSHINE SETTLEMENT

As an established but remote settlement, the existing development area would be sensitive to a notable change in density, visually prominent development, highly manicured landscaping, or other factors that contribute to a more urbanised character.

Any future development should be discreetly located and designed to sit sensitively in this locality. This may involve a cluster development approach, with any future development well set back from the road.

Development of undersized allotments, the increased 'apparent density' (the more visually prominent development through both the wider valley), and the settlement area itself would have the potential to generate adverse effects. However, sensitive cluster development could be appropriate if these matters are addressed.



Moonshine Settlement

6 Conclusion

Rural character is intrinsically associated with open informal areas, and most often with productive farmed land use. In the face of increasing development density, more sensitive development approaches are needed to help retain this valued rural character and amenity. This becomes even more important in landscape areas identified as being 'at capacity' or more sensitive to further development.

Other factors that come into play include providing for well-connected neighbourhoods and facilitating recreational opportunities. Future rural policy needs to be response both to people and place.

DISCLAIMER

We used a lot of different sources of information to write this report. Where we could we tried to make sure that third party information was accurate, but we couldn't audit all those external reports, websites, people or organisations.

If the information we used turns out to be wrong, we can't accept any responsibility or liability if that affects our report or its conclusions. We might (but aren't required to) update our report if we find any additional information that was available when we wrote the report that affects its conclusions.

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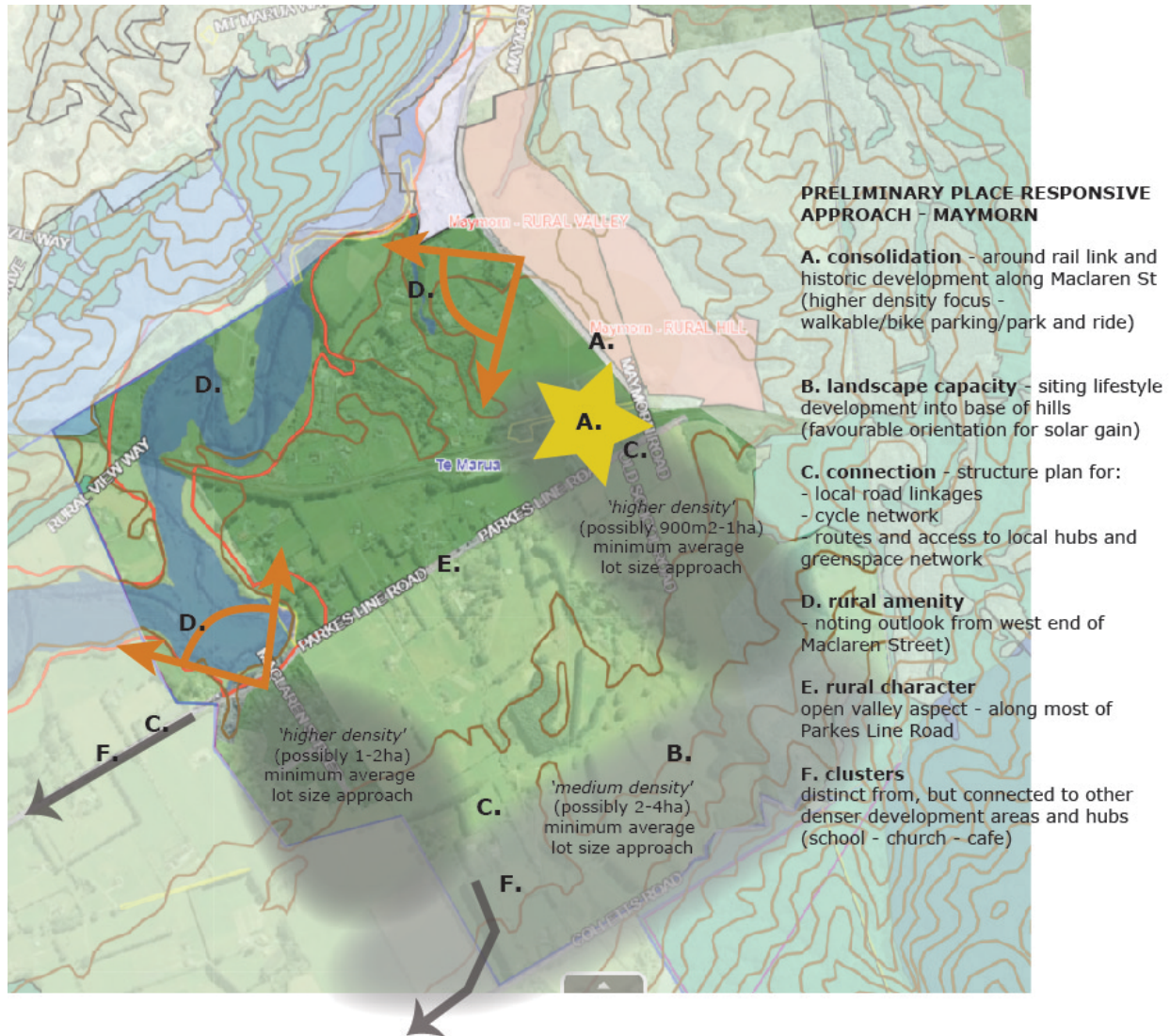
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Version	Date	Author	Reviewer	Comments
1	21/8	Rachael Annan	Philip Percy	DRAFT
2	28/8	Rachael Annan	Anita Coppelstone	DRAFT
3	17/9	Rachael Annan	Jen Olsen	FINAL
4				

Appendix 1: Maymorn Case Study

This plan provides an indicative spatial arrangement, illustrating some of the overarching development considerations for the Maymorn Area (please refer to plan notes below).

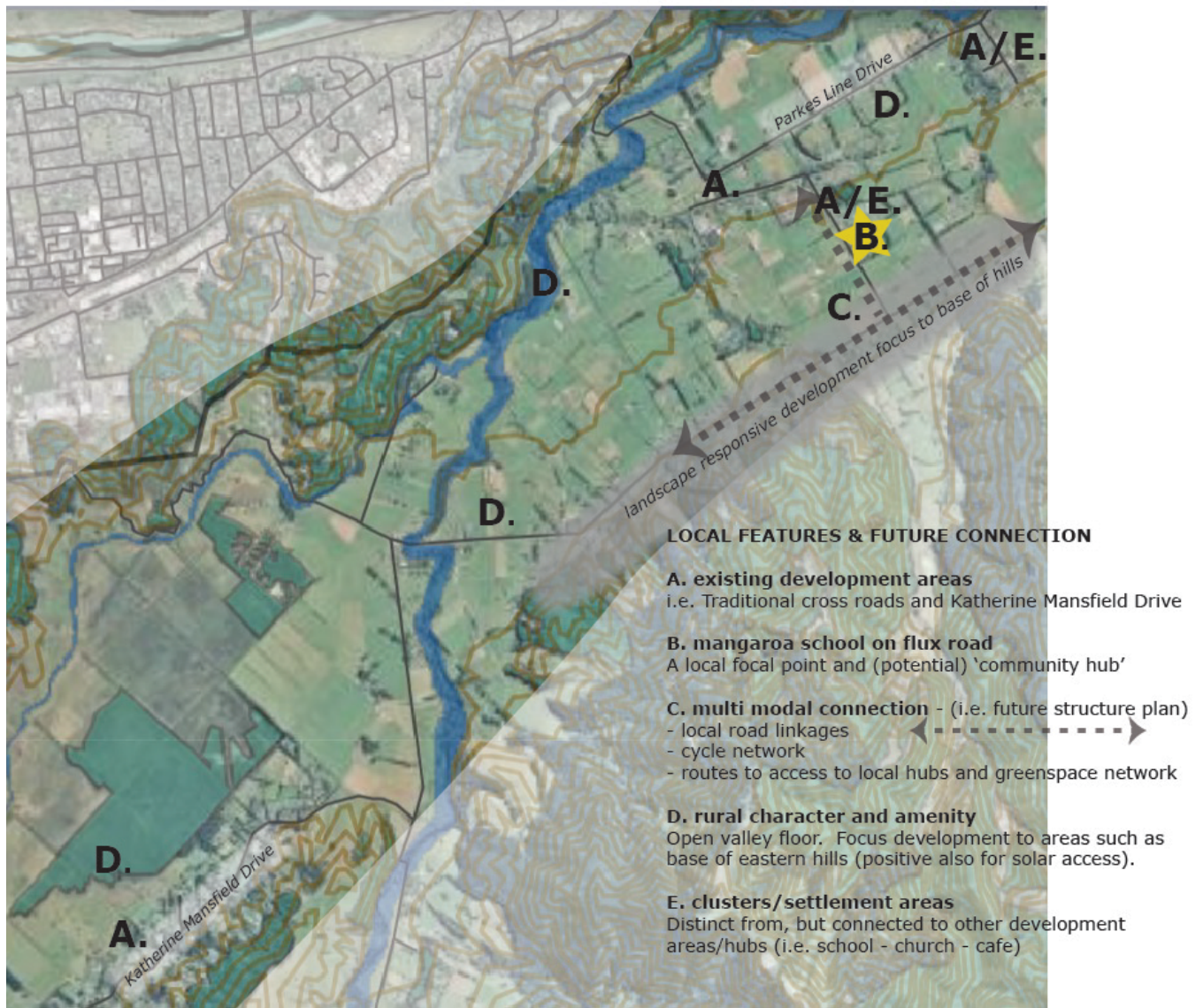


PLAN NOTES:

*This indicative plan is provided to illustrate a preliminary landscape responsive approach for future development. It **does not** represent a fully resolved structure plan or spatial planning approach for Maymorn.*

Appendix 2: Mangaroo Case Study

This plan illustrating some existing local features and considered aspects of future development and connectivity for the Mangaroo locality (please refer to plan notes below).



PLAN NOTES:

*This indicative plan is provided to illustrate a preliminary landscape responsive approach for future development. It **does not** represent a fully resolved structure plan or spatial planning approach for Mangaroo.*

Appendix 3: Similar 'Shadow' development design guidance

Reference: *Wellington District Plan, Volume 2, Rural Design Guide, p.18. (2000, last amended in 2009)*

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

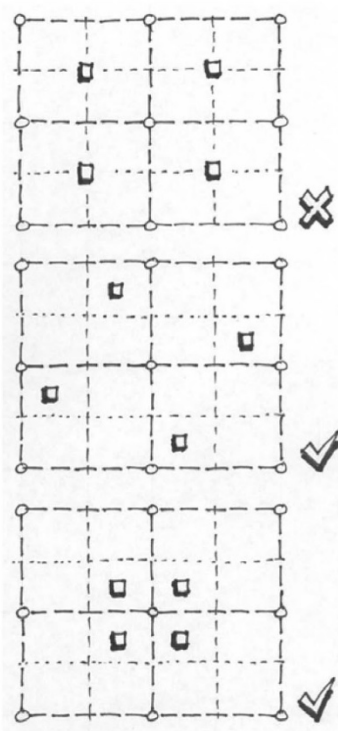
In areas where future intensification is possible:

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