

Overview

The Waitomo caves are one of New Zealand's most iconic and historic tourist attractions. Currently over 500,000 domestic and international visitors go to Waitomo Caves each year and this is likely to increase as tourism operators diversify their activities. The corridor along State Highway 37 between Hangatiki and Waitomo Caves Village, and between Hangatiki along State Highway 3 to the northern boundary of the district, was identified as part of an extensive landscape policy area in the previous district plan. This plan does not identify the same extensive area, instead prioritising the State Highway corridors (outside of the tourism zones) as important connecting routes which have a rural character requiring maintenance and enhancement.

The 2019 Waitomo Caves Village Town Concept Plan was produced in consultation with the New Zealand Transport Agency, community members and tourism operators. This plan implements a number of the Town Concept Plan's components. Some of the key points identified include:

- Ensuring signs are of a design and scale that is appropriate in the surrounding environment.
- Consolidating the Waitomo Caves Village core and making sure that new zoning focuses activities as far as possible into the central village area so this area becomes busy and interesting.
- Examining opportunities to avoid ribbon development, reduce the number of signs and other visual clutter along the State Highway corridors and at the gateway entrances so that their visual impact is less overwhelming, less cluttered and offers more helpful directional signage.

This precinct applies to land zoned general rural, Māori purpose, natural open space and settlement. The plan adds additional controls in respect of signs, relocated buildings and shipping containers. It also controls tourism facilities and retail activities within the general rural zone. In addition to managing signs, the precinct also protects the safe functioning and efficiency of the State Highway network by signalling that development outside of the identified tourism zones should only proceed in specified circumstances.

Objective

Refer also to the relevant objectives in Part 2 District - Wide Matters and Part 3 - Area Specific Matters

- PREC6-01.** Require land use activities and development to be appropriately located and of a density, scale and intensity that maintains the rural character along the amenity precinct corridors.

Policy

Refer also to the relevant policies in Part 2 District - Wide Matters and Part 3 - Area Specific Matters

PREC6-P1. Within the amenity precinct:

1. Avoid ribbon development and visual clutter from signs along the State Highways; and
2. Only allow the development of tourism facilities where they are directly associated with an in-situ natural, cultural or heritage feature; and
3. Preserve the rural character of the entrance to Waitomo Caves Village; and
4. Maintain a delineation between the tourism zone boundaries and the surrounding rural areas; and
5. Encourage buildings which are located so that their visual prominence is minimised, particularly development and associated earthworks on prominent slopes, ridges and skylines; and
6. Avoid activities and development that adversely affect the health and well-being of the Upper Waipa River catchment

Rules

The rules that directly apply to the amenity precinct are located in the:

- [Relocated buildings and shipping containers chapter](#); and
- [Signs chapter](#); and
- [General rural zone](#).

Refer to Part 1 - How the Plan Works for an explanation of how to use this Plan, including activity status abbreviations.