

12. Landscape Policy Area

12.1 Introduction

- 12.1.1 The Landscape Policy Area is an “overlay” Policy Area covering land in two parts of the District; the Waitomo Caves locality and the Mokau-Awakino coastal area. These two areas contain features and landscapes that are particularly sensitive to change. In both cases these sensitive natural features form the basis of tourism development. In the case of Waitomo Caves the tourism development is a long standing feature involving large numbers of tourists visiting daily (about 450,000 annually to the Waitomo Glowworm Caves). Most of these visitors come to the Caves themselves but over recent years the attractions have diversified into adventure tourism and other similar activities. The common natural resource that forms the basis of most visitor attractions is the karst and cave systems therein.
- 12.1.2 The Mokau-Awakino coastal strip is a young tourism area which has potential for further growth. Its key features are the wild and unspoilt west coast beaches and the associated coastal environment.
- 12.1.3 Both areas are essentially rural in character and a Rural Zone will continue to apply to the majority of the land affected. However the Landscape Policy Area introduces another “layer” of controls specifically designed to protect the rural landscape values and the natural features of the areas.

12.2 Resource Management Issues

- 12.2.1 Tourism in the Waitomo District relies heavily on the existence of natural resources, the most notable of which is the karst and cave systems therein. These systems are very sensitive to development.
- 12.2.2 The predicted expansion of tourists visiting the attractions in and around the Waitomo Caves is likely to place considerable strain upon the physical resources presently servicing this community.
- 12.2.3 Waitomo Village has developed in a manner which is heavily linked to the historical background of the area. This connection needs to be maintained in any expansion, redevelopment or new development proposed in this area.
- 12.2.4 New development or tourist facilities along the Waitomo Caves Road can lead to adverse environmental effects of inadequate servicing, and effects on the landscape and entrance corridor to the Village.
- 12.2.5 The development of Mokau and Awakino as tourist destinations will place an increased level of demand upon services which have very limited capacity.
- 12.2.6 Loss of open spaces could destroy the landscape character of the Waitomo Village.
- 12.2.7 The skylines and ridgelines around the Waitomo Village are very sensitive to development.
- 12.2.8 Increasing tourism in the Mokau – Awakino coastal strip could result in adverse environmental effects on habitats, flora, fauna and ecosystems unless it is appropriately managed.

12.3 Objectives

- 12.3.1 To ensure that development does not significantly affect the special qualities of the natural environment in the Waitomo Caves and Mokau-Awakino coastal areas, while recognising the land in the area is predominantly used for pastoral farming purposes. *Issues 12.2.1, 12.2.8*
- 12.3.2 To ensure that any development within Waitomo Caves Village does not adversely affect the existing historical and rural character of the area. *Issues 12.2.3 & 12.2.6*
- 12.3.3 To maintain and enhance the safe and efficient operation of Waitomo Caves Road by avoiding, remedying or mitigating adverse effects associated with the location of traffic generating activities and their parking areas. *Issues 12.2.2 & 12.2.4*
- 12.3.4 To ensure that development does not adversely affect the natural character and habitat values of the coastal environment of Mokau and Awakino. *Issues 12.2.1, 12.2.5, 12.2.8*
- 12.3.5 To ensure that visitor facilities are established in appropriate locations such that adverse effects on traffic safety and on the environment are avoided, remedied or mitigated. *Issues 12.2.1, 12.2.4, 12.2.8*

12.4 Policies

- 12.4.1 To avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of development on significant landforms or other sensitive areas. *Objective 12.3.1*
- 12.4.2 To control earthworks, land disturbance and vegetation clearance that could adversely affect karst systems and the caves therein. *Objective 12.3.1*
- 12.4.3 To avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of land use on ground, surface or coastal waters. *Objective 12.3.4*
- 12.4.4 To require siting and design of buildings in the Landscape Policy Area to protect and enhance the existing historical character, where appropriate, to protect and enhance the rural and natural amenity values of the landscape, and to protect and enhance habitat values. *Objectives 12.3.1, 12.3.2 & 12.3.4*
- 12.4.5 To encourage safe and readily accessible vehicle and pedestrian access within or surrounding tourist areas. *Objective 12.3.3*
- 12.4.6 To avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of road side development within a corridor adjacent to the Waitomo Caves Road. *Objective 12.3.3*
- 12.4.7 To avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of visitor facilities by encouraging the provision of safe and environmentally acceptable facilities for casual tourists, such as overnight parking areas, dump stations, and rubbish disposal facilities. *Objectives 12.3.3, 12.3.5*
- 12.4.8 To recognise and provide incentives for voluntary measures by the community which protect and enhance the natural and amenity values of the District. The incentives are detailed in Section 11.7 of this Plan. *Objective 12.3.1*

12.5 Rules

- 12.5.1 Activity Classification for Landscape Policy Area where it overlies the Rural, Residential or Business Zones. These rules do not apply where it overlies the Conservation Zone.
- 12.5.2 These rules do not apply to an activity that relates to the operation, maintenance, upgrading, relocation, or removal of existing transmission lines, specified in regulation 4 of the National Environmental Standards (NES) for Electricity Transmission Activities Regulations 2009 and which is covered by that NES.
- 12.5.1.1 **Permitted Activities**
- Any activity which is a permitted activity in the relevant underlying zone unless it is a controlled or discretionary activity in accordance with Rules 12.5.1.2, 12.5.1.3, or 12.5.1.4.
- 12.5.1.2 **Controlled Activities**
- Any building between 100 and 200m² gross floor area in the Rural zone. *Policy 12.4.4*
- 12.5.1.3 **Restricted Discretionary Activities**
- Any activity that is a restricted discretionary activity in the relevant underlying zone, unless it is a controlled or discretionary activity in accordance with Rules 12.5.1.2 or 12.5.1.4
- 12.5.1.4 **Discretionary Activities**
- (a) Any earthworks or land disturbance in excess of an area of 1,000m² in the Rural zone, excepting cultivation, drainage, track maintenance, and benching for fencing construction which is a Permitted Activity.
- (b) Above ground telecommunications and electricity lines.

- (c) Telecommunications and radio communications masts, antennas, satellite dishes and accessory structures.
- (d) Buildings that exceed 200m² gross floor area in the Rural zone.
- (e) Industrial activities.
- (f) Clearance of any area of indigenous vegetation in the Rural zone.
- (g) Signs which would otherwise be permitted or controlled activities within 50 metres of Waitomo Caves Road, from State Highway 3 to a point 1 kilometre east of the Waitomo Valley Road intersection.
- (h) Any activity that is a discretionary activity in the relevant underlying zone.

Advisory note: Rules 12.5.1.4(a) and (f) do not apply to earthworks and indigenous vegetation clearance activities regulated under the Resource Management (National Environmental Standards for Plantation Forestry) Regulations 2017. Those regulations prevail over these rules in relation to plantation forestry activities.

12.5.2 General Provisions

The following General Provisions must also be complied with for the proposal to be a permitted activity.

- 16. Roads and Vehicle Access
- 17. Hazardous Substances
- 18. Air Quality
- 19. Signs
- 20. Noise
- 21. Heritage Resources
- 24. Landscaping
- 25. Financial Contributions and Esplanade Reserves
- 26. Subdivision
- 27. Natural Hazards

12.5.3 Assessment Criteria for Controlled and Discretionary Activities

- (a) The extent to which buildings and structures are located close to skylines and ridgelines or on exposed hillsides. Generally buildings and structures should be located at least 25 vertical metres below significant ridgelines and skylines.
- (b) The location of buildings and structures relative to Waitomo Caves Road, and the extent to which they may detract from the existing open rural landscape adjoining the road.
- (c) The location of buildings and structures between State Highway 3 and the coastline in the Mokau-Awakino coastal area and the extent to which they could detract from the natural character of the coastal environment.
- (d) The extent and location of landscaping proposed to screen or soften the visual effects of buildings and structures.
- (e) The external design, construction and finish of structures and the extent to which they use forms, materials and colours that are sympathetic to the landscape.
- (f) The extent, scale and location of proposed roads, accesses and earthworks, and proposals for the rehabilitation and recontouring back to natural ground shapes.
- (g) The size and nature of any quarry or mine, its proximity to cave systems and any likely risk it poses to that system particularly as a result of stormwater runoff or interference with underground waterways and any proposals to avoid or remedy these effects.
- (h) The extent to which activities in the Landscape Policy Area, including the removal of indigenous vegetation, complies with Rural Zone Assessment Criteria 11.6.

Note 1: The Waitomo community has commissioned a Development Plan prepared by Di Lucas and Associates. The Development Plan reflects community views and applicants may wish to refer to it when preparing their applications.

Note 2: The Waitomo Caves Landcare Group, as a group and through its advisors, are developing strong environmental themes into farming practice in the Waitomo catchment. Council may refer applications for resource consent to the Waitomo Caves Landcare Group for comment when assessing the environmental impacts of new activities within that catchment.

12.6 Anticipated Environmental Outcomes

- (a) Protection of natural physical resources of importance to the tourism industry.
- (b) Protection of important landscape features.
- (c) Maintenance of amenity values in the Waitomo Caves locality and Mokau-Awakino coastal areas.