

Memorandum

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Attention:	Shane Kelly
Company:	Rangitopuni Developments LP
Date:	26 April 2024
From:	Ian Boothroyd
Message Ref:	Rangitopuni-Riverhead Forest Countryside Living Proposal
Project No:	BM19058B

INTRODUCTION

Te Kawerau Iwi Settlement Trust (the Trust) owns 3,275 ha of the Rangitopuni-Riverhead Forest. The land is predominantly in commercial pine forests under the management of Matariki Forests.

A countryside living development is proposed for the southern extent of the Rangitopuni-Riverhead Forest (see Figures 1 and 2). The Site has frontage to Old North Road to the south but is otherwise currently in a cover of production *Pinus radiata* forest. The application is for a 210 lot residential subdivision on Lot 1 and a 350-unit retirement village on Lot 2.

This memo sets out the ecological features and ecological values of the land, in order to inform the long term development potential of this landholding, including considerations for the protection of regional ecological corridors and habitat protection. In addition, we set out that the proposed development will meet key national policy requirements.

ECOLOGICAL FEATURES AND VALUES

Vegetation

The production forest has been harvested and the land returned to Te Kawerau a Maki. Several wetlands, occur in the valley basins and are often associated with riparian margins of native broadleaved scrub. Such native riparian strips occur along most of the watercourses flowing through the Site. Two small remnants of regenerating kauri, podocarp and broadleaved forest were also observed in the north-eastern extent of the site. The remainder of the area comprises harvested plantation pine, and some remaining pine forest with diverse native understory assemblages.

Fauna

Threatened or At Risk fauna recorded within, or in close vicinity to, the Site include: long-tailed bats (Threatened – Nationally Critical), forest gecko (At Risk – Declining) and pacific gecko (At Risk – Relict). Suitable habitat exists for other native species such as kauri snail, Hochstetter's frog, Auckland green gecko, kaka, and various cryptic wetland birds such as fernbird, Australasian bittern, spotless and marsh crane.

Freshwater

The Site contains extensive freshwater stream environments including ephemeral, intermittent and permanent streams. Headwaters within the proposed zone flow into the Rangitopuni Stream and Riverhead

Forest Stream. The streams within the site have medium to high ecological value, with current effects of barriers to fish migration in several of the streams and a relatively high deposited sediment load.

Wetlands

Wetlands within the site vary from medium to high ecological value. Wetlands provide a buffering effect and important ecosystem processes, such as reducing sediment and nutrient loads to downstream catchments within the catchments. Wetland features dominated by indigenous wetland plants may also provide habitat for threatened bird species, such as fernbird and Australasian bittern.

Marine Receiving Environment

The Waitemata Harbour, specifically the Rangitootupuni Inlet, is the intertidal receiving area for the Riverhead, Rangitootupuni and Dairy Flat catchments. The Rangitootupuni Inlet is a significant ecological area (SEA-M2-57b) and is considered to be the best example of the muddy, mangrove-lined inlets of the Waitemata harbour (AUP OiP). The Inlet is an important feeding ground for coastal birds and provides an important pathway for migrating fish.

The Kaipara River and the Kaipara Harbour are the receiving environments for the Central Kaipara catchment. The Kaipara Harbour is the largest estuary in New Zealand and the mouth of the Kaipara River is a significant ecological area (SEA-M2; SEA-M1) with extensive areas of mangroves and saltmarsh which provide habitat for threatened coastal fringe birds.

Connectivity

Rangitootupuni has been identified as a key feature of the North-West Wildlink (NWW, Figure 3) because of its size and the presence of long-tailed bats. Rangitootupuni is the fourth largest area of contiguous forest in Auckland after Woodhill Forest and the Waitakere and Hunua Ranges. The NWW envisions a habitat corridor that establishes a landscape scale linkage across the north of the Auckland region, providing ecological connectivity between the east and west coasts. To fully realise the NWW, key landscape features, stepping stones and linkages between them have been identified and need to be managed to facilitate safe dispersal between core habitats across the landscape.

PROPOSED ACTIVITY

The Proposal involves large countryside living lots utilising wherever possible existing internal forestry access roads for access. Waterways were surveyed as an initial step in the design process to provide a wide buffer margin. Balance land areas including the 50 m riparian margin set back areas are also proposed to be re-vegetated using indigenous broadleaf forest species.

A Site-wide vegetation strategy has been developed. The production forest will be cleared to facilitate the wider restoration of the landscape to a cover of indigenous forest, as well as for the creation of access roads and buildable areas. Extensive areas of planting and management of revegetation are proposed with substantial riparian planting and early successional planting (Figure 3).

ECOLOGICAL OUTCOMES

The countryside living lots are planned to occur along ridgelines well above watercourses and wetlands (Figure 4). The proposed 50 m buffer (or greater) provides riparian vegetation well above the typical standard (10-20 m). The extent of improved riparian vegetation along the length of the watercourses within the lots provides for improved localised connectivity (for aquatic and terrestrial biota up and down the catchment) and laterally (for fauna between headwater catchments). Permanent fully vegetated headwaters are also beneficial for downstream water quality. In addition, the proposed countryside living adds value to the NWW through key landscape features, stepping stones and linkages between them to facilitate safe dispersal between core habitats across the landscape. Proposed pest and weed management will also be undertaken within the zone. Overall, the proposed countryside living development will protect and enhance the environmental features of the location and contribute to benefits for the broader landscape.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST KEY DEFINITIONS AND STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

The key high level statutory documents include the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM), National Environment Standards for Freshwater (NESF) and the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPS-IB). The proposed development of the site is consistent with the outcomes expected of the NPS-FM. A more comprehensive ecological assessment will be provided to support the development application at the expert consenting panel stage, which will further assess the potential indirect adverse effects and detail any proposed ecological enhancement actions.

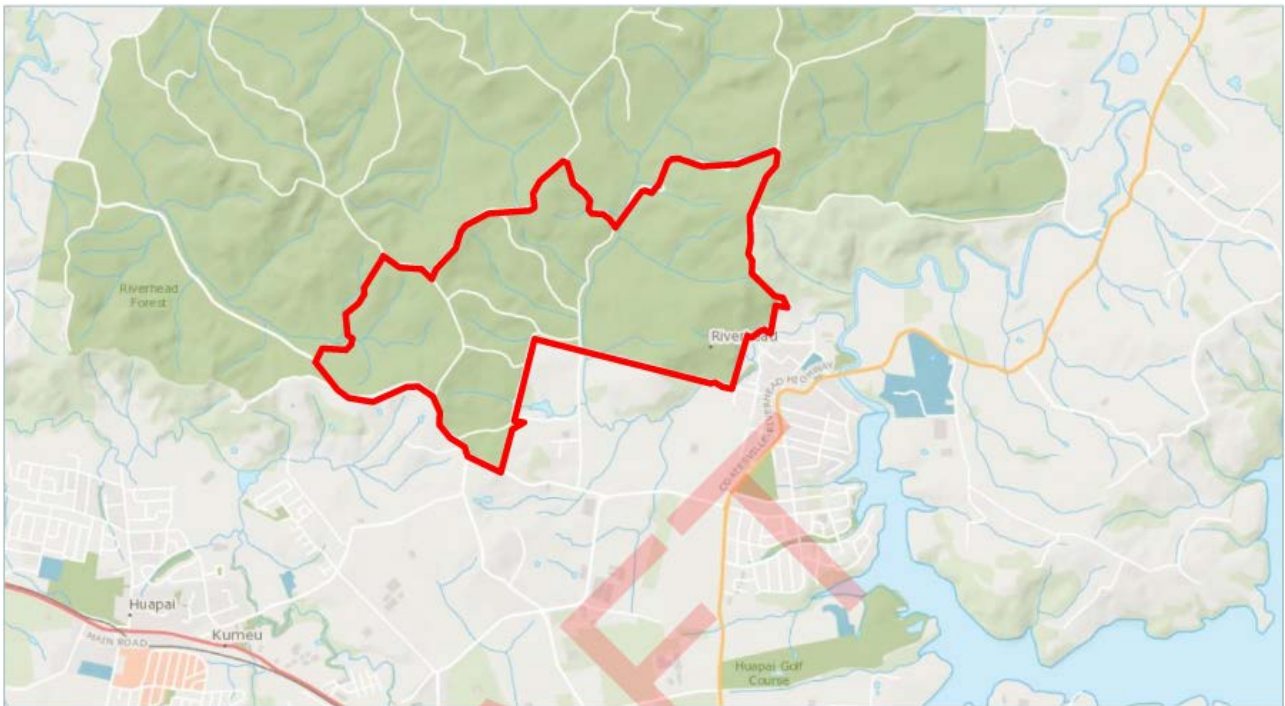


Figure 1. Rangitopuni-Riverhead Forest.



Figure 2. Countryside living zone with waterways marked.

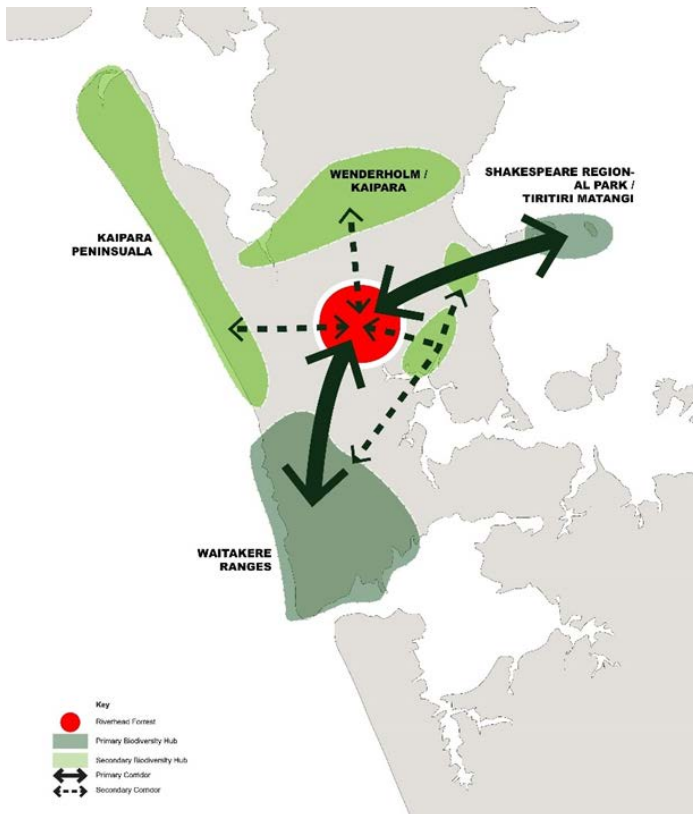


Figure 3. North West Wildlink.

4.3 CONCEPT SKETCH

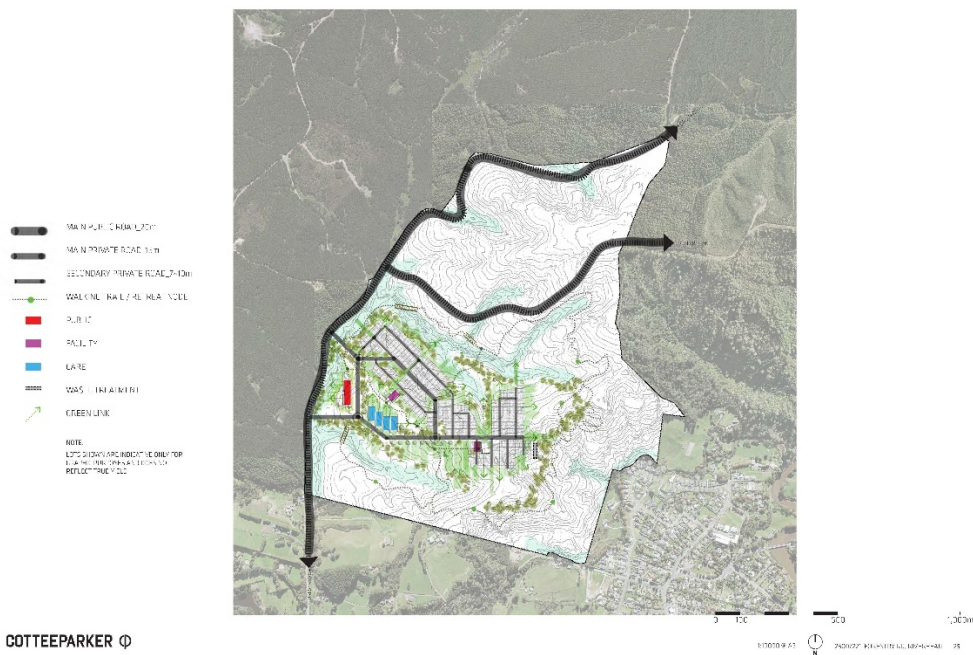


Figure 4. Stage 1 indicative concept plan.