

# Design and Layout

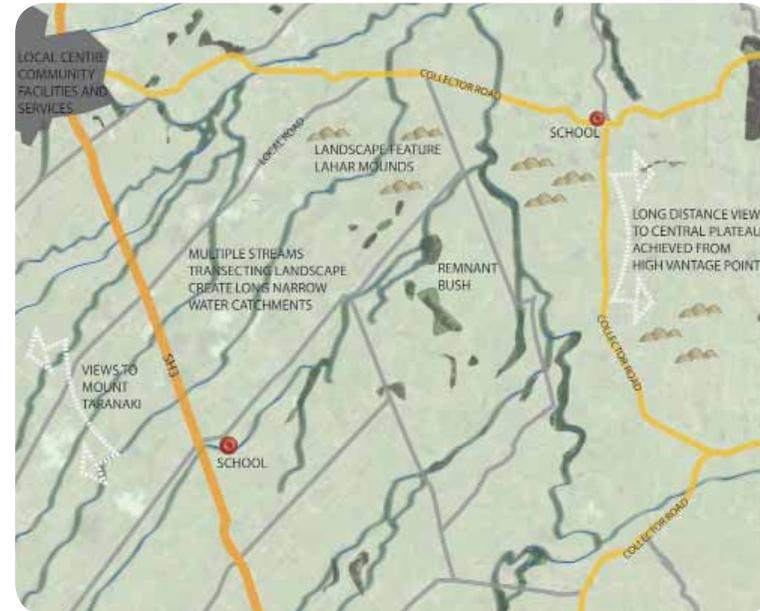
*Appropriately designed subdivisions and developments will lead to quality environmental outcomes. There is opportunity through the design and layout of subdivision and development to implement many of the design principles in these design guidelines. However there are also specific design principles and tips that can be considered at the initial stages of subdivision or development.*

## Site Survey

Scan the surrounding landforms, types of land-uses, roading and development patterns in the wider landscape and respond to these appropriately to guide the design of the subdivision or development to add value to the development.

Tips:

- Try to choose a location for development that relates to existing communities and can be serviced by existing schools, infrastructure, community facilities and transport (e.g. consider the location of existing bus routes).
- Try to balance the number of allotments proposed so that it does not compromise the overall rural use of the land.
- In order to reduce future conflict, make sure the proposed use is compatible with existing activities in the area. Consider the surrounding distribution of allotment use and sizes.
- Good sites often have the following characteristics: Flat to gently sloped areas; high degree of privacy from public viewing points including from the road; free from likely erosion, flooding and unstable movement and known natural hazards; presence of existing development in the surrounding landscape to relate to; existing vegetation on site; and sites that have landform backdrops, i.e. not hilltops and ridges.
- Consider the locations of sensitive landscapes. There might be areas of your site that are more sensitive than others. Mark these on a plan and avoid negative effects of development on the aspects that make the area sensitive to change and are worth protecting.
- Consider whether your site is adjacent to a sensitive landscape, note what is important about the site (e.g. long-distance views, ecological value) and respond appropriately by respecting the existing character.
- Consider the level of existing development in the context of your site and the cumulative effects of adding more development. There may be occasions where the wider context cannot accommodate more development without irreparable damage to the rural character.



*Above: Conduct a contextual analysis at a wide scale. Assess the impact of development on the water catchment and include mitigating measures in the overall proposal. Make the most of views to important landscape features.*



*Left: Conduct a finer grain site analysis that covers greater detail for the site. Consider setting new buildings back/screening or elevating from sources of potential nuisance or reverse sensitivity that reduce living amenity including: Roads, poultry sheds, railway lines, production horticulture and streams.*

## Working with the landscape

On rolling land, try to work with the landscape so new development fits well into the area.

Tips:

- Look for natural breaks in the landscape to conceal buildings from main viewing points (e.g. from roads or from afar) while still providing for good views from residences.
- Use landform to screen buildings and also to provide character, shelter and sustainable energy opportunities.
- Minimise earthworks and ensure the resulting contour scale and slope fits with the surrounding landform.
- Identify and respond appropriately to natural hazards when developing, e.g. set back from areas prone to coastal erosion, water courses or steep slopes.

## Allotment Placement

On rolling land consider clustering allotments and the resulting buildings where they can be concealed.

Tips:

- Look for opportunities to cluster around existing development, provided the amenity of neighbouring properties is not compromised.
- Minimise the effect of development by avoiding spreading houses along roads and ridges as this can reduce spaciousness.
- Note the appropriateness of clustered development should be considered on a case by case basis.

On flat land, maintain densities that are consistent with the surroundings.

Tips:

- It is preferable for allotments and developments to be well set back from the road and maintain rural uses between the road and the development.
- Minimise the effect of development by avoiding spreading houses along roads as this can increase the presence of development, reducing spaciousness.
- Look for opportunities to screen development and to create privacy by using natural landform, setbacks and vegetation.



Above: Select land for subdivision that can accommodate development and protect exposed views, especially those with high amenity, e.g. upper slopes of the ring plain, ridge lines. The houses in this illustration have strategically located vegetation that screens public viewpoints and allows views out, and they are set back from the flood plain.



Above: This local example of clustered development is encouraged because it limits the extent of visible buildings and decreases the perception of higher density. Clustered development can protect land use capability through the creation of a larger balance section that will maintain the open character of the rural environment.

## Boundary Alignment

In order to reduce the effect of development, use natural landscape contours and geographic features to determine allotment boundaries.

Tips:

- Place allotment boundaries around, as opposed to through, important features so they remain intact and can be consistently managed (e.g. bush, water courses, heritage features and hills).
- Try to avoid following fencelines when they dissect through the landscape or do not provide for an appropriately located allotment.
- Provide a reserve/rural land use based buffer to adjoining rural activity.

## Allotment Size

Ensure allotment sizes facilitate good design and retain high levels of amenity while maximising the potential of land for productive purposes.

Tips:

- Small allotments will need to be carefully placed and designed.
- Set back small allotments to allow a rural use to locate between the road and the boundary.
- In order to comply with the intent of the District Plan, ensure that larger allotments and balance areas can be sustainably managed while providing for rural uses.

## Neighbours

Consider how allotments and resulting buildings will relate to each other and to neighbouring properties.

Tips:

- To avoid potential conflicts and reverse sensitivity issues, locate dwellings away from boundaries where there is or is the potential for a rural use to locate.
- Look to have a reasonable separation distance between dwellings unless there are other mitigating measures that will facilitate privacy (e.g. topography or screening).
- Depending upon the circumstances, consider positioning a small allotment close to an existing use so they appear to be related.



Above: Dissecting natural features with insensitive boundaries can compromise the health and amenity of the area. Alternatives include: Shared open spaces in body corporate arrangements, vesting natural features with trusts or other organisations, placing a design covenant on a feature or keeping the extent of the feature within one allotment.



Above: Allotment size: Consider clustering smaller sized allotments and retaining a large, more viable balance section.



Above: Set-backs from poultry farms and some other objects are specified in the District Plan. Whether or not setbacks are a plan requirement, development amenity is enhanced when consideration is given to providing distance between dwellings and other rural uses in combination with other screening mechanisms to separate neighbours.

## Sensitive Landscapes

Respect more sensitive landscapes, including the coast, river mouths, headlands, and the exposed slopes adjacent to Egmont National Park. Sensitive landscapes are highly valued and can generally only tolerate lower densities of development before the values held for the landscape are compromised. Development needs to be carefully managed to ensure the landscape values are retained or enhanced.

Tips:

- Tangata whenua hold special value for Mount Taranaki and views to the mountain from around the district. The coastal environment and waahi tapu sites are other landscapes that are of special importance to tangata whenua.
- It is strongly recommended that development is set back from the coastal escarpment. Most coastal edges (beaches, foreshore) are public lands available for the use and enjoyment of the whole community. Placing buildings too close to the coastal edge, particularly in prominent locations, can significantly reduce the look and feel of the natural coastal landscapes and the experience for recreational users.
- Plant coastal areas with appropriate indigenous species. See: <http://www.taranakiplants.net.nz/natives/coastal/coastal.html> for plant species suggestions.
- Map where your proposed development will be publicly viewed from. It is preferable to avoid intrusive development on prominent ridgelines or from areas that can be viewed from afar. Explore ways of reducing the visibility of the proposed development, e.g. locate the development so that it will be viewed with a hill or vegetation in the background, screen views with landform and existing vegetation, set development back from prominent view points, or consider existing residents views.
- Consider how development reflects and enhances the values of sensitive landscapes by using appropriate scale, form, materials, colours and styles.
- Consider how the edges of sensitive landscapes will be managed to provide a transition to more developed areas.



*Above: Development should aim to be less intrusive than the Plymouth Road example above, which is large and dominant in the landscape. Development needs to carefully address shared and recognised landscape values like spaciousness and rural character.*



*Above: The House for Karen in Pungarehu shows development that is set back from public view points, avoids the prominent headland, with a building that is low-level, long, finished with neutral and recessive colours and nestled into the landscape with coastal planting.*

## Cultural Features

Contact local tangata whenua about the history of your site to increase awareness of the features and values on site. When development is proposed on a property with an identified waahi tapu/ archaeological site consult with local tangata whenua, the New Zealand Historic Places Trust and the Council.

Tips:

- When subdividing property, look for ways to keep the whole waahi tapu site in one lot so that it is easier to manage and does not interfere with the relationship of tangata whenua with their culture and traditions to ancestral land.
- Consider providing access to the waahi tapu site for cultural use, especially for urupa, waterways, coastal areas and indigenous bush. These areas may be important for local tangata whenua for the purposes of food and medicinal collection, visiting ancestral grave sites, etc.
- Consider ways to appropriately manage edges of waahi tapu sites, e.g. fencing, planting.
- Subdivision and development of an archaeological site may require consent from an archaeological authority and monitoring of the site during development. Contact the Historic Places Trust: <http://www.historic.org.nz/en/ProtectingOurHeritage/Archaeology.aspx>

## Heritage Features

Identify and look at options to protect important heritage features on the site.

Tips:

- Consider the context of a heritage feature. Locate new development so that it does not dominate nearby heritage sites or buildings and does not compromise the setting of the historical landscape.
- Consider whether heritage features could complement the development, e.g. providing cues for character and scale of new development, opportunities to create public access and signage providing information so the community can learn about the significance of a site.
- The New Zealand Historic Places Trust may be able to provide advice for appropriate development of a heritage feature. Refer to the ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for best practice conservation principles: [http://www.icomos.org.nz/docs/NZ\\_Charter.pdf](http://www.icomos.org.nz/docs/NZ_Charter.pdf)
- New Plymouth District Council has funding available for enhancement of heritage items: <http://www.newplymouthnz.com/CouncilDocuments/PlansAndStrategies/DistrictPlan/HeritageProtectionFund.htm>



*Above: Omata Stockade. This pylon obstructs public views to a historic site. Development adjacent to a historic site may provide the opportunity to conserve or enhance site values. As a minimum standard, development should locate infrastructure in sympathy with the site and avoid detracting from site values.*



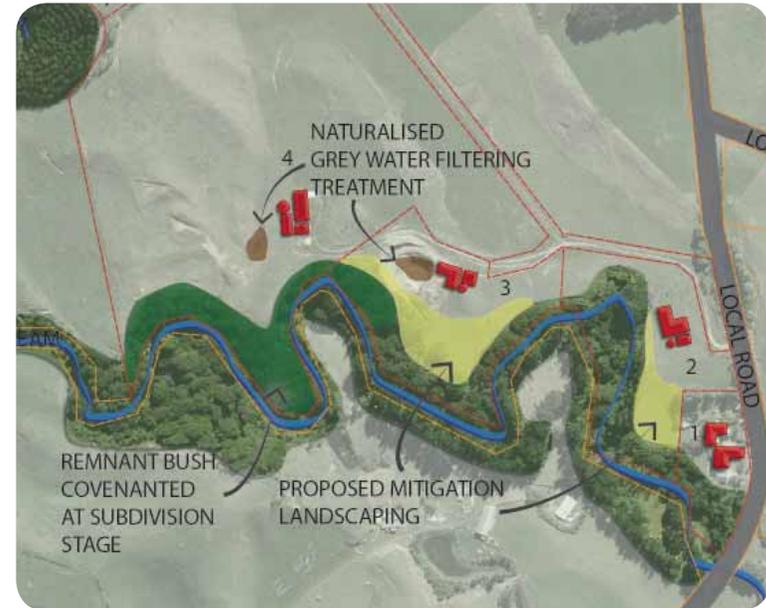
*Above: Hurworth Cottage (on the left) is a District Plan listed heritage item. The new caretaker's cottage at Hurworth Cottage is set back from the heritage item, it has a complementary scale, form and gable angles, and is finished with neutral, recessive colours.*

## Natural Features

Work with the natural assets and ecological systems that the site provides and look for opportunities to enhance natural features (e.g. streams, rivers, vegetation, dune areas and wetlands). The subdivision stage is a critical time to put in place the framework that will maintain and enhance natural features and vegetation. There is unlikely to be another chance to address these issues in the foreseeable future yet the effects can be significant.

Tips:

- Consider protection of important features through covenants, e.g. QEII bush covenant, .
- Consider ways to join up existing vegetation and habitat to enhance the environment for species travel, e.g. wildlife corridors
- Assess subdivision layout options and ensure riparian areas can be appropriately managed, e.g. retain in single ownership.
- Contact Taranaki Regional Council to find out about assistance and resources available for riparian planting: <http://www.trc.govt.nz/riparian-management>. There are five basic principles involved in riparian management:
  - Fencing the riparian margin.
  - Establishing appropriate vegetation.
  - Maintaining the vegetation.
  - Minimising any adverse effect on waterways from land use in or near the margin.
  - Installing protective river control works, if needed.
- It is recommended that development uses natural landform and systems to reduce cost and engineering works, e.g. use low areas for stormwater detention.
- Check the District Plan for rules relating to waterways and waterbodies on-site, e.g. esplanade strips or reserve agreements.
- Consider providing public access to waterways.



Above: An example of a plan used to record existing features, measures to protect and enhance features, proposed earthworks and information about planned stages of development. Keep plans up to date. Create a timeline of development with photos of important development stages and phases of newly planted or regenerating bush growth.

# Building Location

*It is important that buildings are positioned to retain the wide and open spaces in the rural area. The location of a building can affect how it is viewed from afar and within a more localised environment.*

## Visual Effects

Locate buildings where they will fit easily into the landscape.

Tips:

- The visual impact of development can be mitigated by avoiding building placement in prominent locations where they will be highly visible (e.g. along ridgelines and on exposed slopes).
- If locating your building on a less prominent ridgeline, consider how the size, colour, and design of the building can reduce the effect of development.

## Open Character

Ensure that buildings are located to maximise the spaciousness of the site.

Tips:

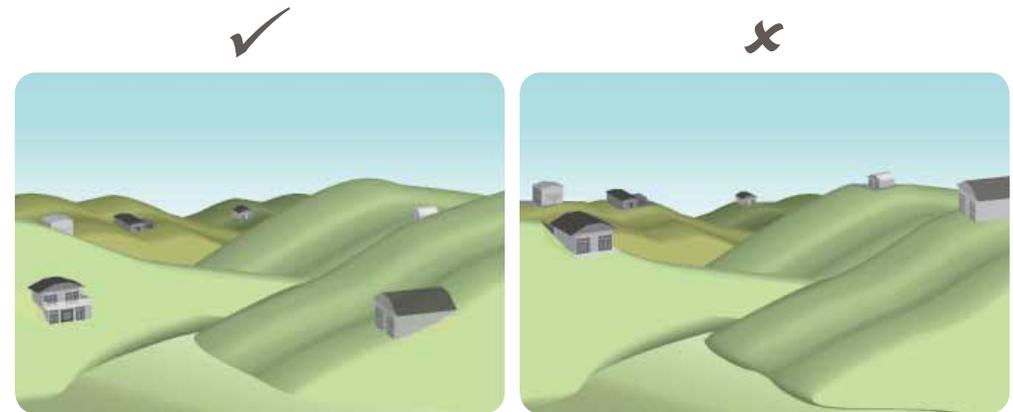
- Consider clustering buildings together to allow for increased open space.
- Locate a second dwelling near to the existing dwelling to retain spaciousness of the rest of the site and maximise investment in services (e.g. shared accessways).

## Earthworks

Look for naturally occurring building platforms, so that there is limited need for earthworks (e.g. on flat land and in valleys).

Tips:

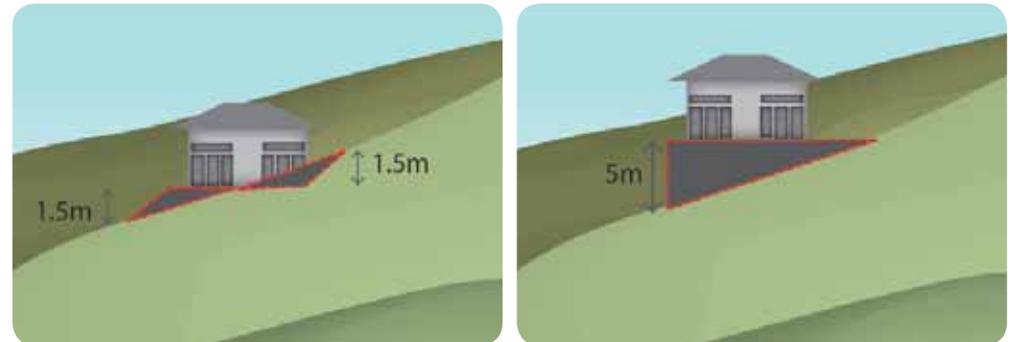
- When earthworks are necessary, ensure the land is contoured to fit into the natural landform and that land is appropriately reinstated.
- If possible, avoid excavation of prominent hill faces.
- When slopes require retaining, try to keep step heights to a 1.5m max.
- Consider protecting newly formed slopes with planting that is in context with the surrounding area when reinstating earthworks.
- Provide for on-site stormwater management and ensure the development appropriately addresses overland flow paths.



*Above: Avoid locating buildings on skyline ridges, hill tops and prominent hill faces. Consider protecting such locations with covenants on property titles.*



*Above: Clustered buildings in combination with smaller sections and a larger balance section minimise the effect of development on the open character of the rural landscape.*



*Above: Minimise earthworks, and ensure the resulting slopes are able to support vegetation to allow for good screening and stabilising opportunities.*

## Building Setback

Ensure that buildings are appropriately set back from the road and from side boundaries.

Tips:

- Houses close to the road give an impression of an urban or more intensively developed environment.
- Retain rural uses between the building and the road.
- Consider the use of planting/landscaping to obscure buildings.
- To ensure privacy and high levels of amenity, locate dwellings as far away from boundaries as practical.

## Building Scale

Ensure larger buildings, particularly those not associated with a rural use, are appropriately located.

Tips:

- Locate large buildings (particularly those not used for a rural use) on large sites and set back from the road boundary to allow space for appropriate landscaping.
- Consider softening around the building as opposed to screening the boundary so that there are filtered views to and from the development.

## Existing Vegetation

Look for opportunities to integrate buildings with existing vegetation on the site.

Tips:

- Locate buildings so that existing vegetation provides shelter and screening.
- Some trees are protected in the District Plan. Contact the Council to find out if trees are protected.

## Eco-Efficiency

Take advantage of site features to provide for eco-efficiency.

Tips:

- Orientate buildings towards the sun (north) and consider solar energy opportunities.
- Position the building so that it is sheltered from the wind and rain.



Above: District plan rules require buildings to be set back from boundaries to some extent. Careful consideration of privacy and outlook beyond District Plan provisions can enhance the amenity of development. Locating buildings near existing vegetation or where the topography frames views increases privacy for neighbours.



Above: The effect of large buildings in the rural landscape can be minimised with darker building colours and clumps of vegetation that visually break up the bulk of the building.



Above: Locating buildings and associated infrastructure with respect for existing vegetation and landscape features can add value to a new development and also maintain biodiversity quality for the wider context.