

# 9 Future development pattern

## 9.1 Limiting the number of growth areas

A key part of the development of Taupo District 2050 was the identification of a range of areas for future growth and then an evaluation of those to establish the ones which are most appropriate. All of these areas were identified in Volume Two of the Strategy and are illustrated on the maps in Appendix 1.

The number of growth locations was limited in Taupo District 2050 due to two main factors. Firstly, the Strategy includes a growth model which indicates that over the next 20 years there is likely to be a need for between 6,150 and 7470 residential Lots. This growth model has helped to provide a parameter for not only the number but also the approximate

size of the future growth areas.

The second factor is linked to the need to achieve a critical mass of people in a number of growth areas. Locating future residential development into a limited number of growth areas will ensure that those growth areas will achieve a critical mass of people sooner than if that population was spread over a larger number of geographically diverse growth locations.

This achievement of a critical mass of people is important in ensuring that both the capital and operational costs of infrastructure are efficient and affordable. Furthermore, the grouping of people together into a limited number of growth areas will make public transport more efficient and economically viable in the future. While less important in Taupo at present, all of the national and international indications are that planning should provide for an urban form that can support future public transport.





## 9.2 Densities of Development

To meet the requirements of an evolving community with diverse lifestyle needs Taupo District 2050 envisages several densities. They are:

- Residential Environments

Residential	8 – 10 households per hectare
High Density Residential	10 – 15 households per hectare
Low Density Residential	4000m <sup>2</sup> – 10,000m <sup>2</sup> (1ha) lot size

- Rural Living Environments

Rural Residential size	10,000m <sup>2</sup> - 20,000m <sup>2</sup> (2ha) lot size
Rural Lifestyle Environment	20,000m <sup>2</sup> - 40,000m <sup>2</sup> (4ha) lot size

These various bands of development densities are designed to accommodate growth by providing a range of lot sizes to meet market demand and a desired concentration of development. Ultimately land identified as suitable for any of the above densities will be zoned for residential or rural/residential living. Land outside the above environments will for the purposes of growth management, be defined as rural and expected to maintain the existing level of rural amenity and character.

### Residential Environments

#### *Residential*

The Residential Environments will comprise the land expected to be serviced to full urban standards, and the resulting development of the land will be required to meet comprehensive residential subdivision standards. The density of 8 – 10 houses per hectare provides for an

average lot size of about 650m<sup>2</sup> – 800m<sup>2</sup>. This is consistent with the existing residential areas around the District which have a high level of open space and amenity, and will allow for the continued high standards for roading, infrastructure and reserves.

#### *High Density*

High density residential areas at present tend to be concentrated near the Taupo Town Centre, or in historic areas of higher density development such as Lake Terrace. Planning provisions in these areas have also tended to focus on providing for commercial activity such as motels and offices. For the purposes of new residential areas, high density is likely to provide smaller residential lots and apartment type living. While there may be a distinct character demarcation in some instances between residential and high density, in many cases there may be only small pockets of high density development. In any case, high density development proposals will still be required to meet certain residential design criteria across the total site.

#### *Low Density*

This is based on the traditional Rural/Residential area that is now covered in the Proposed District Plan as Low Density Residential and managed by a site coverage standard of 5%. It does not pretend to have any rural characteristics, and simply provides for a larger residential lot than would otherwise be found in the normal residential environment. Existing and future areas of Low Density Residential are likely to be found adjacent to the residential areas, and will in the future be fully serviced with water and wastewater reticulated systems. However they may not have other urban level services when it comes to roading (street lights, footpaths etc) or the same level of neighbourhood open space/reserves.

## Rural Living Environments

### *Rural Residential*

This new proposed environment will provide a buffer between residential density and rural land where appropriate in the identified growth areas. It will provide for larger lot choice and introduce some space and amenity opportunities around the edges of urban areas. Due to topography and other constraints, it is very likely that this environment will directly adjoin an urban area. It is likely that these lots will be serviced where appropriate, but in most cases the environment will maintain a rural feel even though it is not expected that such areas would contain rural activity. They will be managed by minimum lot sizes to maintain the intent of the zone and ensure that rural residential areas do not become intensified at a later date.

### *Rural Lifestyle*

There are a number of existing pockets of 4 hectare lifestyle lots around the District. Lots of this size are generally accepted as too small for most commercial farming activity, but they do provide choice, and can be used for some limited rural activity. Some are intensely farmed and sometimes friction occurs between lifestyle properties when these smaller lots adjoin larger rural properties. The Rural Lifestyle Environment will have a rural flavour and will focus on those existing rural locations where smaller lots already exist. The existing rural lifestyle properties are generally not serviced, but in the future there may be limited water and wastewater services.

### **Rural Environment**

The remaining land outside the residential and rural living environments will be rural land containing established rural activity and generally much larger properties. To maintain the distinction between the urban and the

remaining rural land, minimum rural lot sizes will need to be maintained with subdivision below 4 hectares recognised as a non-complying activity.

### **Application of these densities**

The lot sizes discussed are indicative of the type of development density anticipated to create a desired range of property sizes which will meet market demand and create a variety of neighbourhoods with distinct character differences. In the case of residential environments, development density may continue to be managed by land use provisions as well as possibly introducing minimum lot sizes. For rural living environments and the remaining rural environment, minimum lot sizes are likely to be the main planning provision to manage density. The use of a non-complying activity status to avoid creating lots smaller than the desired range and to avoid future re-subdivision of land will be considered as part of future changes to the Proposed District Plan.

It is intended that the range of desired residential and rural living densities be kept to the suggested number above, to avoid a myriad of zones being created around the District, and the Proposed District Plan itself becoming unusable. However, there may be opportunities from time to time to reflect subtle locational differences. Specific resource consent applications will provide the opportunity for such variations to be addressed given locational differences.

Just as the Proposed District Plan will be limited to these identified density ranges, it is anticipated that future structure plans will similarly utilise these densities to ensure consistency. This will help to ensure a more seamless transition for structure plans into the Proposed District Plan over time.



## 9.3 Management of the Rural Environment

The Proposed District Plan will be amended to provide Council with greater control over development in the rural environment. This is likely to involve increasing the minimum lot size to 10 hectares in the rural area, and making subdivision below 4 hectares a non-complying activity. This is designed to create a “true rural environment” that recognises rural amenity, creates a clear distinction between the different forms of urbanisation and rural land use, and reduces the future demands and cumulative pressures on roading and other infrastructure.

Taupo District 2050 identifies growth areas for the reasons outlined earlier, and all other existing rural land is therefore not identified for

urban growth. Having identified the areas of future growth, other land must have a level of regulatory restriction to avoid indiscriminate land use change that is not consistent with the objectives and principles of Taupo District 2050 or indeed the Resource Management Act 1991.

The intent is to lift permitted rural subdivision from 4 hectares to 10 hectares. Below 10 hectares subdivision will be treated as a discretionary activity, the same as subdivision below 4 hectares is treated at present. This means that an application can be made to subdivide below 10 hectares, and there will always be the ability to consider the proposal not only in terms of environmental outcomes, but also the creativity and innovation of the design.

The purpose of the proposed rural environment 10 hectare permitted activity rule is to reduce the density of development on land, and maintain



the general pattern of ownership, outside the identified growth areas. Historically the Proposed District Plan did not set a minimum lot size for subdivision in the rural area because it had not yet determined which areas were more suitable than others for urban type development. The Proposed District Plan set up a framework to deal with subdivision and land use change on a case by case basis by way of the resource consent process. Having determined over time that the Proposed District Plan is not providing sufficient guidance to assist with decisions on various subdivision applications, Taupo District 2050 was commissioned to identify which areas were more appropriate for land use change and resulting urban/lifestyle growth.

Of more consequence is the proposed action under TDC 1.2 to make subdivision in the rural area below 4 hectares a non-complying activity. At present, as introduced by Variation 8, any subdivision in the Rural Environment resulting in lots below 4 hectares is a discretionary activity. This 4 hectare rule was introduced to create



a minimum lot size performance standard to provide the ability to assess smaller lifestyle and residential subdivisions against Proposed District Plan rural amenity and rural functioning objectives and policies. It treats the land in any location as equal and does not necessarily prevent inappropriate subdivision patterns in terms of urban form and wider growth issues.

The existing 4 hectare subdivision standard was criticised during the Variation 8 process, as being neither rural in nature in terms of maintaining rural amenity, nor urban in terms of the ability to service the lots. In many parts of the country where significant areas of rural land have been grided into 4 hectare parcels, the ability to use the land for anything more than lifestyle lots is minimal, and the resulting residential lifestyle use of the land leads to demand for improved roads, water supplies etc. This then leads to further infill type subdivision until at some point, the locality is no longer rural, and the land itself is not coping with elements such as water supply or wastewater disposal.



Increasing the permitted rural subdivision standard from 4 hectares to 10 hectares attempts to address Resource Management Act 1991 Part II matters in terms of the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. It is a land area that provides for some rural land use, and a lot size such that it does not attract a solely residential lifestyle buyer. It allows for diversification, flexibility for building location, and the retention of environmental values such as vegetation, landscapes and historical sites.

Taupo District 2050 is the basis for strategic zoning in the Proposed District Plan that will essentially restrict urban type lifestyle lots on rural land outside the growth areas. The Proposed District Plan has in the past been criticised for not providing strategic direction, and it is doubtful that a level of planning control and integrity can be maintained without strategic zoning. The permitted subdivision standard of 10 hectares, and non-complying status below 4 hectares in the remaining rural environment, will ensure that property sizes reflect true rural objectives and are not subject to the infill friction that has been created in the past.

#### Open space between development areas

To facilitate a 'village feel' to the District's urban areas it is proposed to maintain and enhance the areas of open space between the existing and new areas of growth. The network of open space plays an important part in maintaining the feel of separation between settlements like Pukawa, Omori and Kuratau.

Traditionally, much of the open space between existing settlements has been in multiple Maori ownership or under the control of the Department of Conservation. Maori owners are starting to signal development aspirations for parts of this network of open space. Similarly, parts of land controlled by the Department of Conservation are leasehold land.

Maintenance of these key areas of open space between settlements is a fundamental element of the pattern of development being promoted by Taupo District 2050.

