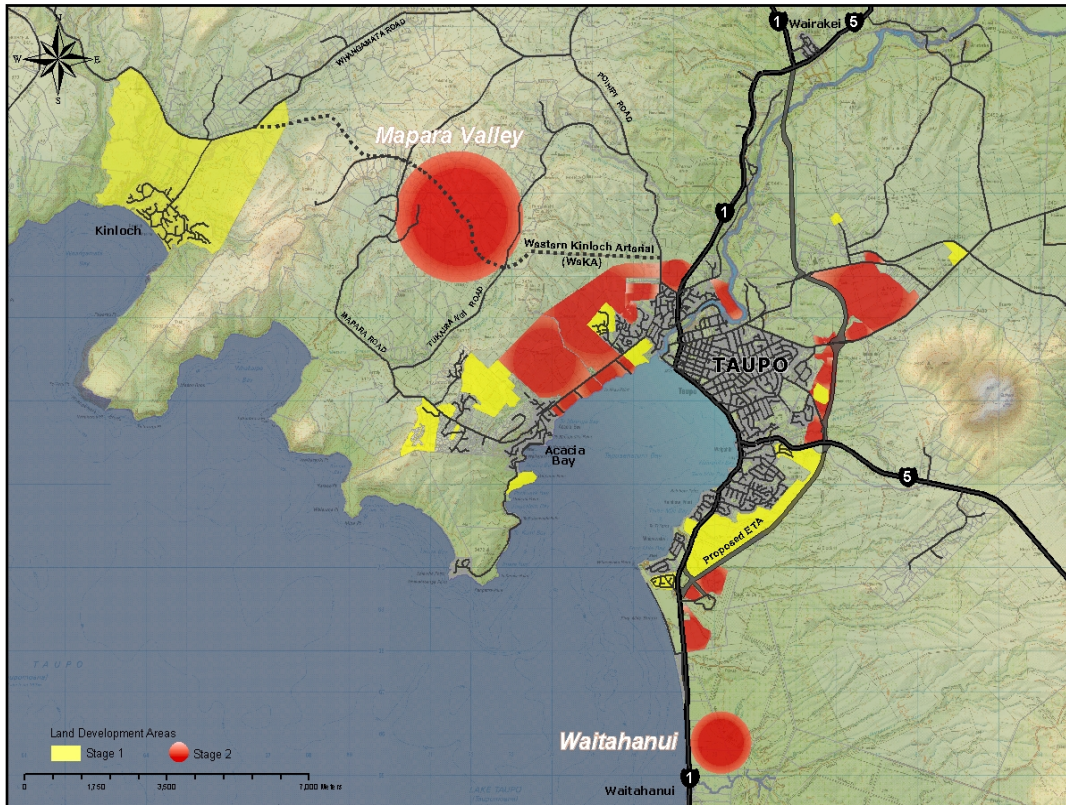


9.4 Northern Growth Area

Figure 9 Northern Growth Area



This area stretches from Waitahanui around to Kinloch taking in Taupo Town and the Mapara Valley. It is the location of approximately 80% of the anticipated future growth. Because it will accommodate a majority of the future residential growth it will need to reflect this with a variety of residential housing types and locations. This diversity will be important in ensuring affordability and satisfying the changing demands in residential housing type driven by changes in household structure.

A key element for growth in this northern area is critical mass. Because this is where the majority of people are to be located, it is where the most significant investment will be made in the range of infrastructure. To make that infrastructure provision efficient and affordable it is desirable to try and cluster people together. For this reason the number of growth areas needs to be limited thereby avoiding development on too many fronts.

Significant structure planning has recently been undertaken in Taupo Town and Kinloch. Because this strategy seeks to build on planning already completed in conjunction with the community, it is anticipated that these two areas will proceed to develop in accordance with those structure plans.

Both of these urban areas provide existing reticulated networks and established local roading patterns. To varying degrees they also have a developed community infrastructure. Furthermore development on the fringes of these areas is able to be accommodated in a relatively efficient and affordable manner.

An analysis of both structure plans indicates that the Kinloch area has an approximate capacity for another 800 residential lots, while the Taupo Urban Area has an approximate capacity for a further 3,300 residential lots. This gives a total minimum capacity of 4,100 residential lots. This estimate for the Taupo Urban Structure Plan area does not include the substantial Maori landholdings in the form of the Rangatira E farm and the Paenoa Te Akau block, which may be able to be developed on a leasehold basis.



It would be undesirable from a real estate market perspective to focus on filling up all of the Kinloch and Taupo Town areas before moving on to a new growth area. Such an approach would limit variety of choice, restrict supply and consequentially make housing more unaffordable.

The proposed approach is to focus on Kinloch and Taupo Town where there is already a good infrastructure base and at the same time open up an additional growth area. This provides the desired variety for the market and thereby extends the timeframe for reaching capacity in Kinloch and Taupo Town.

By 2026 it is estimated that the actual take up of lots will be approximately 500 in Kinloch and 3,000 in the Taupo Urban Area. This is a total of 3,500 over 20 years meaning approximately 2,000 additional lots will be needed in other growth areas.

The evaluation process has identified both Waitahanui and the Mapara Valley as the two logical areas for urban expansion.

Growth Issues

Taupo is partially surrounded by a geothermal resource of national significance. The utilisation of that resource for the generation of electricity does have an impact on the town's urban growth. If not effectively addressed this has the potential to result in unsustainable and risky growth management outcomes for the Council and the community. Council also has an absolute duty under the RMA 1991 not to permit urban development in areas of actual or potential natural hazards. The nature and location of the geothermal resource means that the available growth options are limited.

The utilisation of the Wairakei-Tauhara geothermal resource poses a particular challenge for the management of Taupo's urban growth. The establishment or expansion of incompatible land-uses has the potential to lead to reverse sensitivity conflicts which threaten both the energy resource and the areas of urban expansion. The challenge is to reconcile the development potential of the geothermal resource against urban growth.

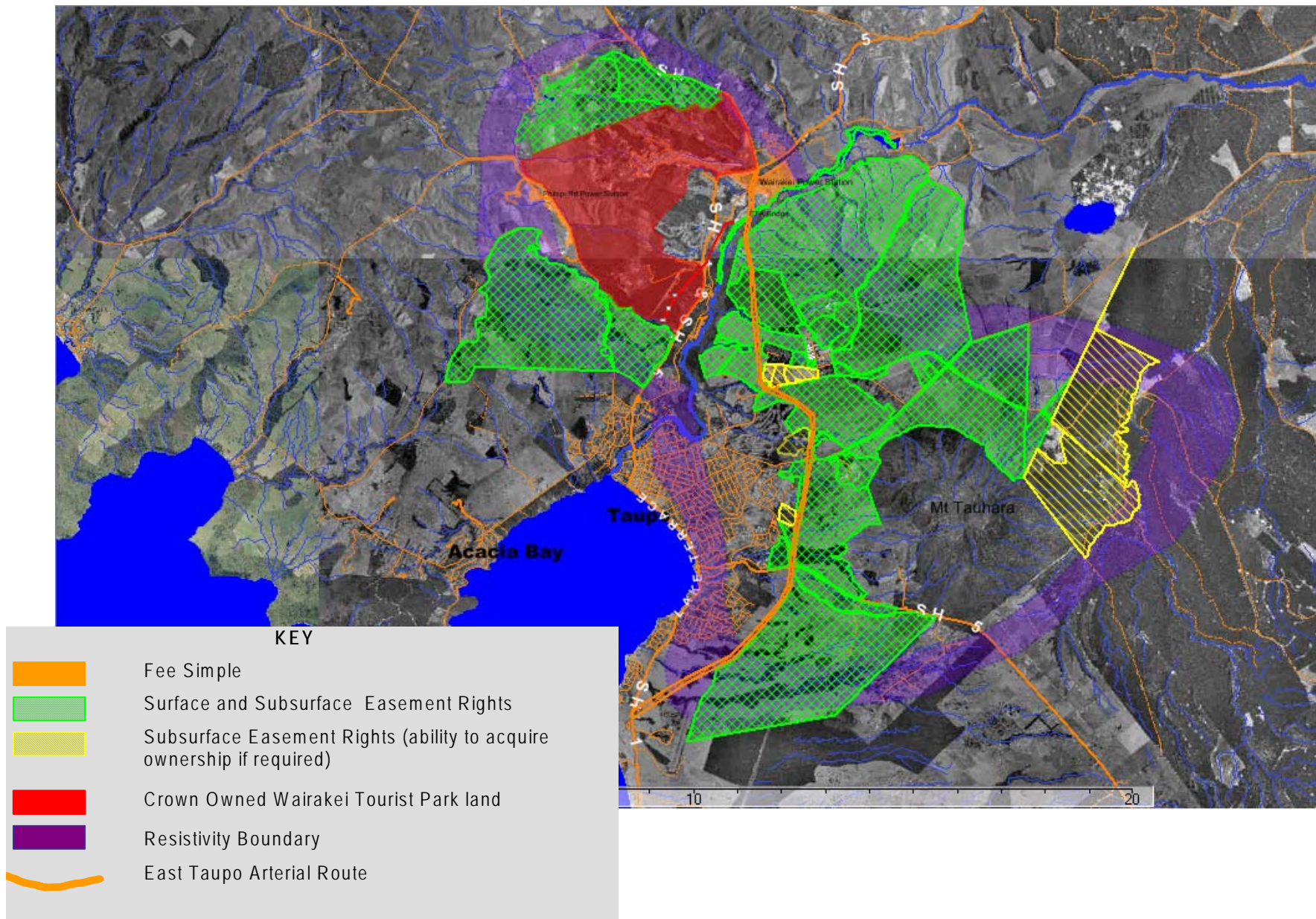
It is important to acknowledge that large parts of the existing Taupo Urban Area are built over significant geothermal resistivity areas. These are identified in Appendix 9. As a consequence, parts of the Taupo Urban Area are subject to varying levels of subsidence as a result of ongoing geothermal resource development. Given this awareness it is important that sound geothermal resource information is available to the community and any future geothermal development is carefully planned and monitored so as not to exacerbate the current situation.

It is inappropriate to have urban development on land which is naturally subject to geothermal influences. Hot ground, hydrothermal eruption and subsidence are all acknowledged as potential risks. Furthermore, urban development compromises the ability to access and utilise the underground energy resource – which is increasing in importance particularly given the national commitment to renewable energy resources, New Zealand's limited hydrocarbon resources and the recent rises in the cost of petrol.

Contact Energy Ltd hold a number of surface and subsurface encumbrances over land in the Taupo District. Figure 8 shows the location of the easement rights they currently hold. In addition to the resistivity areas, these encumbrances are another element that must be considered when evaluating the various options for the future growth of Taupo Town.



Figure 10 Contact Energy encumbrances



Future development pattern



In addition to the generation of electricity and other industrial uses, the geothermal systems in the Taupo District are valued for their scenic, recreational, cultural, and spiritual values. This includes a number of tourism operations associated with both activities that utilise the geothermal resource and some of the geothermal features in the District.

The Taupo Urban Structure Plan (2001) and the 2004 update outlined that because the Wairakei-Tauhara geothermal system encompasses the Taupo urban area there are large tracts of land which are unavailable for conventional urban development. Given this, it was considered prudent that the East Taupo Arterial ("ETA") be utilised as the urban fence. It is intended that growth to the east and southeast of the ETA will be discouraged. This will create a buffer between future residential areas from industrial and geothermal resource development activities, and avoid potential reverse sensitivity conflicts.

Effects of the Resistivity and Encumbered Areas on Future Growth Options

An analysis of Figure 8 indicates that Taupo Town has no contiguous growth areas available in either the north or the east. Given the cost of servicing and the relatively slow rates of growth, new growth areas need to be adjacent but not necessarily physically contiguous, to existing settlements. Options such as Broadlands and Opepe are quite disconnected from existing settlements. Neither would be able to develop quickly enough to support basic community services and all of these would have to be obtained from existing settlements. In addition, market attractiveness of these areas could well be an issue.

The only unfettered area with sufficient critical mass for future development is the land to the west between the existing Taupo Town and Kinloch.

Waitahanui

There are challenges in developing Waitahanui but it has been identified as a future development area because of its potential for a comprehensive development such as a marina. Previous studies have identified a future shortage of marina berth facilities. Waitahanui is considered to be a potential location for a waterways style development similar to that in Whitianga as it is low-lying and in close proximity to the Lake. It is estimated that approximately 200 residential lots could be accommodated. Challenges include:

- Protection of lakeshore amenity values (including lake water quality).
- State Highway access (Transit New Zealand will have a key role to play in any future development in this location).
- Wastewater infrastructure capacity.

Mapara Valley

It is proposed to centre this future urban growth area on a major cross valley transport corridor linking Kinloch and Taupo, the West Kinloch Arterial (WeKA). There are a number of elements which make the Mapara Valley desirable for future growth:

- The location between the established urban areas of Kinloch and Taupo Town offer opportunities to create better transport links between the towns, with substantial benefits for the ongoing growth to the west.
- The Mapara Valley is very large and therefore able to accommodate a critical mass of population. This will make the funding of future infrastructure more efficient and affordable. In particular it will make public transport more economic in the future with the three urban

areas connected by a key corridor. This large land area is also important because it ensures that there is capacity for future expansion beyond the initial 20 years.

- ➔ The ability to link with the existing Taupo Central Business District and a future secondary activity centre in Rangatira E also makes this an attractive growth location.
- ➔ The valley is largely unaffected by natural hazards. Although there is some localised faulting this can be accommodated through design at a structure plan level.
- ➔ A private primary and secondary school will be built within the Mapara Valley near the route of the WeKA. This education facility will act as an important anchor for future residential development in the Mapara Valley and is recognised as a crucial piece of community infrastructure for the future Mapara Valley community and the Taupo District as a whole.



With the route of the WeKA passing through the middle part of the Mapara Valley it is sensible for the future commercial centre to be located in close proximity to that arterial road. Future residential development will be developed around that centre and radiate outwards. This centre in the middle part of the Mapara Valley is vitally important in securing a sense of place for the future community. Furthermore, its development is crucial if the principles of live, work and play are to be successfully applied to this community..

There are a number of other reasons why development in the Mapara Valley needs to be focused on the central part of the Mapara Valley:

- ➔ Mapara Road already faces significant capacity issues and is considered inappropriate for the large increases in traffic flow if growth was to be focused at the southern end of the Mapara Valley.
- ➔ Future growth focused on the southern part of the Mapara Valley would significantly reduce the benefits of a cross valley link between Kinloch and Taupo making it uneconomic. As a result the greater benefits for Taupo and particularly the Kinloch area would be removed.
- ➔ Formal consultation as part of the Taupo West Rural Structure Plan identified a community desire to have development set back up the valley away from Whakaipo Bay. This was based on concerns about water quality, landscape values and the immediate impacts on Whakaipo Bay.
- ➔ Future development is unable to be located further to the north due to the existing geothermal field, consented power station, existing surface and subsurface encumbrances and the future plans for re-injection of geothermal fluid in this northern area.



The exact extent of the future growth area in the Mapara Valley will be determined through future structure planning. While the future commercial centre, the focus of the growth node, will be centred on the WeKA, future residential areas may well stretch further to the south at differing densities. The southern extent of the future urban area will need to reflect the community's desire for a substantial setback from the margins of Lake Taupo.

Other Growth Areas

Other potential growth areas are not currently being pursued. This decision is based on the inadequacy of some of the other areas identified in Volume Two of the Strategy, such as Wairakei, which is affected by a geothermal system, or Opepe which is considered to be too isolated from the existing urban areas..

One of the key reasons for limiting substantial future growth to Kinloch, Taupo and the Mapara Valley is infrastructure investment.

Both Taupo District Council and other infrastructure providers have made significant investment in establishing existing infrastructure services such as the Taupo wastewater treatment facilities. By limiting the number of development fronts to four the agencies that provide infrastructure can ensure that the existing infrastructure is used most efficiently and new infrastructure is provided in the right places at the right time for a reasonable cost.

Commercial and Industrial Growth in Taupo Town

With the anticipated growth in population there will be an increasing need for commercial and industrial land within the northern growth area. The provision of that land was considered as part of the Taupo Urban

Structure Plan (2001 and 2004). That Structure Plan identified future commercial and industrial land to the east and the west of the East Taupo Arterial (ETA). It also identified additional industrial land around the airport to the south of town.

That previous planning has been carried through into Taupo District 2050. Heavy industrial activity will be promoted on the identified industrial land to the east of the ETA in the area bounded by Centennial Drive and Broadlands Road. Heavy industrial is considered most appropriate here given the geothermal constraints and proposed Tauhara power station. This area links well with the existing heavy industrial area in Rakaunui Road and the ETA which is the District's major transport link to other regions.

To the west of the ETA there is an area of land between the ETA and the existing urban area which will be made available for lighter industrial and commercial activity with smaller footprints. This area is bounded by State Highway 5 to the south and Broadlands Road to the north. It will link well with the established industrial area at Miro Street via Crown Road. Most of this land is currently owned by the Council and will be released for development following structure planning.

One of the trends highlighted is the emergence of large format retailing in and around Taupo Town. To date there has only been limited development of this form of retail such as the Warehouse and a number of large supermarkets, however there is increasing pressure for a large scale complex with a range of large format retailers and smaller specialised shops. Such complexes have become common place in other parts of New Zealand and have been represented throughout the country in a variety of forms.



This strategy seeks to promote the location of large format retailers on the northern side of Spa Road in the area bounded by State Highway 1 and Opepe Street. This area is adjacent to the existing Central Business District and as such large format retail in this location would essentially become part of the Central Business District. This approach has been favoured as it avoids the lessons learned in other communities around the country. In many of those towns the establishment of a large format retail complex separate from the existing town centre has resulted in a significant decline in those town centres. Close proximity of the town centre and large format retail is considered the most favourable result in terms of the viability of the existing Central Business District and the broader urban form. This reinforces the Central Business District as the retail and commercial heart of the District.

This area to the north of Spa Road is currently utilised for a range of commercial and light industrial land uses. It is anticipated that the availability of the Council owned land to the west of the ETA will act as a catalyst for many of these tenants to move from Spa Road out to nearer the ETA and existing industrial area. Given the strategic advantages for the community of such a shift, it may well be appropriate for Council to consider acting as an agent of change to facilitate this transition.

A dispersed approach will be taken with regard to those large format retail uses unable or unwilling to locate to the north of Spa Road. Rather than coming together in a large complex those large format retailers will be actively encouraged to locate in a dispersed pattern with no more than two or three retailers on any one site. In taking this approach the Strategy is sending a strong signal that an additional retail complex should not be established that would undermine the viability of the existing town centre.



Integrated planning for sustainable growth



Other Commercial Centres

It is anticipated that Taupo Town with its Central Business District and industrial land will, continue to be the District's major employment centre.

There is currently a small developing commercial centre at Kinloch and this is unlikely to change significantly over the initial 20 year planning period. Traditionally, Kinloch has been a holiday destination and is evolving into more of a commuter village for people working in Taupo Town.

The Mapara Valley is likely to be similar to Kinloch with many of the future residents commuting to employment in Taupo. However, the Western Kinloch Arterial (WeKA) between Kinloch and Taupo is likely to generate a significant amount of through traffic, opening up commercial opportunities in the middle of the Mapara Valley. As a result, future structure planning for the Mapara Valley should provide for a commercial centre near the WeKA. This new centre will not only provide commercial and retail facilities for the residents of the Mapara Valley, it will also be associated with some expanded employment opportunities. The provision of these employment opportunities will mean that the principles of live, work and play will be able to be implemented within the Mapara Valley. However, the desire to locate substantial residential development in the Mapara Valley means that it is unlikely to be suitable for significant industrial activities.

With a significant proportion of future growth in this northern area located to the west of the Waikato River, there will be an emerging need for a major secondary commercial centre to support this growth. Ideally this secondary centre would be located between Nukuhau and Acacia Bay on the Rangatira E farm. This reflects the fact that west of the Waikato River

is where a substantial proportion of new residential development is likely to be focused in the short to medium term. It will also allow for ready access from a variety of locations once the future roading links are secured and existing corridors upgraded. The other advantage of this location is that it provides a viable land use for the farm land which can only ever be leased given legislative constraints on the development of multiply owned Maori land.

For this last reason the Rangatira E farm may well be utilised for a range of land uses in the future which are compatible with leasehold arrangements. This could involve further commercial development, education facilities or tourist opportunities.

Summary

- The northern growth area will accommodate an estimated 80% of the Districts growth over the coming 20 years – approximately 5440 residential lots.
- Future residential growth will continue to be focused on Kinloch and Taupo Town within the areas identified in previously completed structure plans.
- A transport corridor between Kinloch and Taupo will service future growth to the west of Taupo – the West Kinloch Arterial (WeKA).
- A new growth area will be developed in the Mapara Valley centred on the new western transport corridor (WeKA).
- Waitahanui has potential for limited growth undertaken in a comprehensive manner.
- Commercial and industrial growth will be promoted in accordance with the Taupo Urban Structure Plan 2004

- Commercial centres will be promoted in Kinloch, the Mapara Valley and Rangatira E.
- Large format retailing will be encouraged to locate on the northern side of Spa Road adjacent to the existing Central Business District.

Future Directions

With four development fronts in the form of Kinloch, Taupo Town, Waitahanui and the Mapara Valley all operating at the same time there is likely to be some flux within the market. People will chose where they wish to live and Taupo District 2050 has limited control over this. The rate at which each of the four growth areas will develop is unknown.

In terms of planning for the future it is estimated that over the next 20 years the Mapara Valley will need to accommodate approximately 2,000 residential lots at varying densities. It is estimated that Waitahanui will accommodate approximately 200 lots at urban density potentially around a marina complex and associated facilities. The extent of development in these locations will not be known until further analysis and specific structure plans have been completed.

For the Mapara Valley, future structure plans will need to focus on the central part of the valley around the proposed West Kinloch Arterial road. The structure plan will be limited in its northern, western and eastern extents by the ridges that define the valley. The community's strong message about setback from Lake Taupo and Whakaipo Bay in particular mean that a substantial setback of approximately three kilometres from the Lake will generally mark the southern boundary. The extent of this southern boundary will need to be better defined through the structure plan taking into account the likely requirement for 2,000 residential lots.

Structure plans for Kinloch and Taupo Town have been completed. This has enabled the identified structure plan boundaries to be adopted in the Taupo District 2050. Residential, commercial and industrial growth will be allowed to take place within these boundaries in accordance with the adopted structure plans. However some areas still required further infrastructure planning before they can be incorporated into the Proposed District Plan.

The rate of development will need to be monitored in each of the growth fronts to ensure a steady supply of land is made available through strategic zoning in the Proposed District Plan.



Integrated planning for sustainable growth

