

TE ARAI – REVISED PROPOSAL, NOVEMBER 2008

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Following receipt of the Officers' Report on the proposed Plan Change and Variation, which recommended that the Change and Variation be declined, the Te Arai Coastal Lands Trust (TACL) embarked on a rigorous re-appraisal of the project, taking in to account the issues and concerns raised in the Officers' Report and in submissions.

The Officers' Report identified four key aspects of concern:

- Nature and scale of development in relation to Regional and Statutory Planning,
- Scale and balance of development in relation to park and open space,
- Landscape and natural character, and
- Effects on Ecology, and in particular on the Fairy Terns.

As a consequence of this reappraisal, a reduced proposal has been arrived at.

This Explanatory Statement provides an overview of the revised proposal. Separate documents appended to this overview address the planning provisions and the assessments.

The overall philosophy underlying the proposed Plan Change and variation, and the planning techniques embodied in them, have been retained, but the scale of the development has been significantly reduced.

One of the fundamental issues relating to the project as notified was its character and scale in the context of the Auckland Regional Council's strategy of constraining "urban" settlement growth to within the defined Metropolitan Urban Limits (MUL) as defined in the Regional Policy Statement (RPS) and Auckland Regional Growth Strategy (ARGS). Submissions in opposition to the notified Plan Change and Variation considered that the project was in conflict with this regional strategy, and these submissions were largely endorsed by an independent review commissioned by Rodney District Council. Essentially, it was considered that what was being proposed was a substantial new urban settlement lying outside the MUL.

The reappraisal has resulted in the formulation of a different scale and type of development—essentially a coastal holiday development, aimed at providing a range of interests and affordability, utilizing the forest setting, and strongly recognizing the importance of the ecological features and the remote and natural character of Te Arai.

A conscious aim has been to provide something that is in marked contrast to, at one end of the scale, up-market coastal residential, and at the other end,

conventional suburban development that often misses the point of its coastal location.

The Te Arai Structure Plan and associated plans illustrate the overall development clustered between the Coastal Park and the productive pine forest, with a mix of residential types, a range of recreational facilities, controlled access to the beach, set in and surrounded by forest.

The revised concept incorporates the following elements:

A total of 180 residential units, located north of (and buffered from) the Te Arai Stream, set back at least 200m beyond MHWS and the proposed Coastal Park, recognizing the integrity of the Outstanding Natural Landscape (ONL) provisions of the Regional Plan.

Retention of the existing productive pine forest behind the proposed development, to provide a strong vegetated framework.

Four types of residential units, with differing section and building sizes, and design controls:

- “Type A - Forest Homes” (40) are located within the existing forest environment but on the coastal side of the retained productive forest.
- “Type B – Visitor Cottages” (60) provides rental/visitor accommodation, clustered close to a range of community facilities.
- “Type C - Golf Homes” (20) are located adjacent to a nine hole golf course.
- “Type D - Coastal Homes” (60) are located immediately behind the Coastal Park, arranged in clusters of 5-12 sites within the Forest Recreation area.

The table below sets out the subdivision, bulk and location controls for these residential types. Plans illustrating these residential types are included in the appendix to the Structure Plan.

	Forest Homes Type A	Visitor Cottages Type B	Golf Homes Type C	Coastal Homes Type D
Minimum Site Size (m ²)	1500	400	600	1000
Maximum Site Size (m ²)	2000	1200	1500	2000
Cluster Size	5-8	5-8	-	-
Group Size	-	-	5-10	5-12
Height (m)	7.5	7.5	7.5	4.5
Building coverage (maximum)	20% up to maximum of 300m ²	40% up to maximum of 250m ²	40%	40% up to maximum of 600m ²

A range of community facilities, aimed at providing visitors with a variety of recreational experiences. The nine hole golf course has a small club house, and a family "pitch and putt" golf facility is also proposed. Warm thermal water exists on the site, and thus there is the opportunity to establish tepid leisure pools. The surrounding forest provides extensive opportunities for walking trails, bridle tracks, and equestrian facilities are also proposed. Biking trails would provide another appropriate recreational activity.

Access to the beach is proposed to be carefully controlled. The existing single road access will be retained, but the alignment modified. The car park will be pulled further back from the beach, and sensitively designed and landscaped. Pedestrian access to the beach will be managed via walkways into the coastal park-one objective is to retain the "remote" feeling by actively discouraging easy access beyond the immediate confines of the developed part of the zone.

Vegetation management is retained as an integral aspect of the project. The dune vegetation on the Coastal Park behind the beach will be retained and progressively enhanced by planting of native vegetation to maintain a "Vegetation Wedge" between the beach and residences to ensure retention of the natural character of the beach environment and erosion protection. Within the proposed development areas, pine forest will be thinned and revegetation managed to enable living/recreational activities to occur without losing the pine forest context/environment. Beyond the development areas, production forestry will continue while providing elements of recreation. South of Te Arai Stream the joint venture has offered land to public agencies for purchase, to create a viable regional park in association with the Te Arai Point reserves.

The scale of the proposed development - specifically the proposed residential yield - has been set by the need to ensure, on the one hand, the financial viability of the project and, on the other hand, the ability to provide the recreational and environmental protection components whilst not compromising Regional and Statutory planning directions.

Provision of public/environmental benefits: It has always been accepted that, in return for development rights, public benefits need to be provided. These benefits were listed in the Plan Change and Variation, and largely remain unchanged:

- Provision of a Coastal Park extending back from the beach fronting the development area, including the outstanding natural feature and not less than 200m (100ha).
- Active native re-vegetation within the Coastal Park, maintaining and sustaining the natural character/erosion protection "Vegetation Wedge".
- An active programme of ecological management involving predator control, ranger management, prohibiting dogs and cats with specific protection in design location and habitat improvements, a financial contribution to the Fairy Tern recovery programme. Revegetation within

the Forest Living Area, Forest Recreation, the coastal dune lands and wetlands will add to biodiversity.

- Providing recreational facilities accessible to the general public - an improved car park, nine hole golf course and separate "pitch and putt" facility, pools, horse and bike riding facilities. Surf life saving and public amenities (toilets, changing rooms) will be provided.

Regional Planning Context: As noted previously, the earlier development proposal, which was the subject of the Plan Change and Variation and involved 850 dwellings, was considered by the Council's review to be in conflict with the RPS. This revised concept has been specifically designed to avoid this conflict. The proposed development is clearly not an urban settlement, it is intended to provide holiday accommodation, it does not incorporate commercial or employment activities other than those specifically related to serving residents and visitors. Its scale is modest - being set at a threshold adequate to fund facilities for the public benefit. Its approval will not put the RGS at risk of any precedent effect.

Plan Change and Variation Provisions: The structure and techniques incorporated in the notified Plan Change and Variation are substantially still valid with respect to the revised development proposal. The type of development and the scale have reduced, but the basic concept of a development set in a forest remains the same. Changes to the notified provisions are addressed separately, but can be summarized as follows:

- Deletion of the Village Zone - dwelling typologies previously provided in the Village Zone are now referred to as Type B (Visitor Cottages),
- Amended rules relating to revegetation removal, consistent with THOH submission on the Plan Change,
- Reduction in height to single level for Type D (Coastal Homes),
- Rules included to trigger Landscape and Revegetation Management Plans for the Coastal Dune and Park,
- Shorebird Management Plan provisions,
- Pedestrian, Cycle and Equestrian trail network,
- Revegetation Plans required upon subdivision of Forest Living lots,
- Inclusion of requirements for building design to be compliant with Design Guidelines,
- Deletion of staging as this is no longer required due to the reduced scale of the project,
- Amendments to the Objectives and Policies to reflect the revised proposal, and
- Minor changes to the subdivision rules to reflect the larger lot requirements for Type C (Golf Homes) and Type D (Coastal Homes).

One of the criticisms of the notified provisions related to the lack of certainty as to specific development proposals and controls. This has been addressed through the above changes.

Development of part of the forest along the lines proposed will provide the following benefits:

- Protection and sustainable enhancement of the coastal environment, ensuring the long term integrity of the beach's natural character and the physical integrity of the dune system.
- Provision of a beach holiday environment, offering accommodation and recreational activities for a cross section of the New Zealand public, set in a forest environs - such an experience being increasingly difficult to find.
- Enhanced long term economic return from the land, to the benefit of the Treaty beneficiaries who settled for their "economic benefit".
- Managed public access to the beach, in contrast to the existing uncontrolled situation.
- Formal management and protection of the ecological values/elements within the zone in contrast to the existing situation.

Conclusion: TACL has taken careful cognizance of the matters and concerns raised in the Officers' Report, and as a consequence has significantly modified development proposal whilst staying within the parameters of the notified Plan Change.

It is considered that the resulting concept will provide the planning framework that:

- Enables Iwi to benefit from their Treaty settlement,
- Provides the general public with a practical and affordable beach holiday and recreational amenity,
- Provides high levels of protection to the ecological features of the area within the zone,
- Safeguards the natural character of the beach, and
- Provides long term, sustainable protection to the coastal margin/dune system.

The effects of the changes outlined in this overview are addressed by specialists and their comments are attached to this document.

