

Rakaia Huts Context Map | Opportunities & Issues

Figure 14



Rakaia Huts

Introduction

Location

The settlement of Rakaia Huts is located on the north bank of the Rakaia River, 45 minutes south of Christchurch and 16km south west of Leeston.

Mana whenua

The coastline from Kaitorete Spit south to the Rakaia River mouth, including the area around Rakaia Huts, the Rakaia Lagoon and Rakaia Island, contains a number of recorded archaeological sites that relate to the Maori occupation and settlement of the area. Rakaia Huts is located in an area of extensive kainga nohoanga at the mouth of the Rakaia River. The area was also part of the trail from Taumutu south along the coast.

The human occupation of sites associated with moa and moa hunting in and around Rakaia Huts is attributed to the earliest periods of human habitation in New Zealand. Evidence of occupation and use of the site indicates that the area contained hundreds of ovens, and middens dominated by moa remains but also containing seal and dog bone and smaller quantities of bird, fish and shellfish, and artefacts, particularly flakes and blades.

The Rakaia Huts moa hunter site was first identified in the late 1860s and was investigated by Julius von Haast between 1869 and 1871. His findings from the site were later used to identify and define a moa hunter culture in New Zealand. Subsequent work by other archaeologists has further identified the extent of the archaeological material located on the middle and upper terraces at the Rakaia River mouth. A Conservation Management Plan (CMP) of the Rakaia Huts moa hunter site was completed in 2009 to ensure that the meaning and importance of the site is conserved and able to be appreciated and interpreted for present and future generations.

European settlement

The arrival of Europeans in the Canterbury region resulted in considerable changes to land use as well as tenure. Despite these changes, traditional use of many areas continued, including in the Rakaia Huts area.

The early runs along the coast between the Rakaia River and Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere were first licensed in 1853. From west to east these included the Waterford (covering the Rakaia Huts area), Homebrook and


Prices Station. All of the stations were free-held and divided up early: including most of Homebrook by 1865 and most of Waterford by 1866. The three stations east of the river were located on heavy land and all ran cattle.

Early free-holding in this area of the Selwyn district was dominated by the need to drain the swamps. This was accomplished in a remarkably short timeframe, from 1860 to 1880. To drain the swamps successfully, not only did Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere have to be opened to the sea and maintained at a much lower level than Maori had been accustomed to, but the various artificial drains, Coopers Lagoon and the small rivers to the west all had to be punched through the beach to the sea. There are still remains of these piped outfalls along the Rakaia River mouth coastline; concrete culverts have replaced the original iron pipes or wooden box culverts, but traces of the earlier structures are still evident today.

Another activity along the coastline was gold mining, which began in the early 1880s. The activities of individual miners did not last for many years and attempts to recover gold on a large scale were unsuccessful. Mining was reactivated during the 1930s depression, at a time of government support for employment programmes such as gold mining.


In 1876, 5,000 quinnat salmon were unsuccessfully released into the Rakaia River. However by 1916 salmon weighing up to twenty five pounds were being recorded in the river. The river is still well-known for its salmon fishing, with the mouth of the river and lagoon being popular fishing spots, particularly between January and March. Trout are also found in the river and during whitebait season the river mouth is a popular location. Before the turn of the 20th century, huts were built by fishermen for temporary shelter on the north side of the Rakaia River near the mouth. Later, Ellesmere county land became available for lease and in 1924 land owned by F. Pierson and A. Cridge was subdivided into 17 freehold sections. Rakaia Huts became more popular over time to the point where eventually it has become a weekend escape for more than just fishermen. In 2003, land was formally subdivided by the Selwyn District Council to provide titles for 50 existing dwellings. This also allowed for houses and huts to be used as permanent residents. Rakaia Huts has an established camping ground with a popular 20 minute river walk from the foreshore to the north branch of the river.

 **2015 POPULATION**
85

2031 PROJECTED POPULATION
85 
(NO PROJECTED POPULATION CHANGE)

INCREASES
DURING WHITE BAITING
AND FISHING SEASONS

 **58 PEOPLE EMPLOYED**


7 ZONED HOUSEHOLD CAPACITY



Employment

Rakaia Huts represents a very small component of the township-based employment in the Ellesmere area. Employment within the settlement is primarily in the rural sector with the balance being in retail and commercial sectors followed by the industrial sector²⁸.

Population

There are approximately 85 permanent residents currently living at Rakaia Huts and the population increases significantly during whitebait and fishing seasons. The population of Rakaia Huts is predicted to remain static through to 2031²⁹.

Township status

Selwyn 2031 categorises Rakaia Huts as a rural township whose function is:

“...based on village characteristics with some services offered to the surrounding rural area.”³⁰

District Plan land use zoning

Rakaia Huts is subject to a standard density Living 1 land use zoning (see Figure 14), which has a minimum average allotment size of 800m². This density has been influenced by the requirement to manage wastewater discharges on-site through individual septic tanks.

Much of Rakaia Huts is subject to an archaeological site overlay and wāhi taonga management areas, with corresponding District Plan provisions managing land uses in these areas.

The housing stock of Rakaia Huts is characterised by detached housing with a number of older, bach-type dwellings along Pacific Drive, along with a number of more recent dwellings, particularly around Ocean View Place.

Residential land capacity

Rakaia Huts has limited developable land available within the area currently zoned for residential purposes, with a single vacant lot identified. There are a total of 118 standard residential sections in Rakaia Huts, of which five have the potential to be further developed. These five sections consist of 0.9 hectares with a potential yield of 7 households.

There is limited scope to provide additional zoned land to accommodate what is identified as being static projected population growth through to 2031 based on the identified constraints and the function and character of the settlement.

There is significantly less developable land available within Rakaia Huts compared to other townships in the Ellesmere Area. However, static projected population growth and the presence of a number of significant resource management issues appear to preclude significant growth in the settlement.

Business and industrial land capacity

The District Plan does not prescribe any Business 1 or Business 2 land use zonings in Rakaia Huts, which reflects the absence of any recognised businesses or services in the settlement, with the exception of the camping ground.

An expert retail assessment has confirmed that there is insufficient demand identified to support the active zoning of additional Business 1 or Business 2 land.³¹

²⁸Market Economics: Ellesmere Area Plan Assessment, August 2015, P13. ²⁹Selwyn Growth Model. ³⁰Selwyn 2031: District Development Strategy, Strategic Direction 1, adopted October 2014, P34.

³¹Market Economics: Ellesmere Area Plan Assessment, August 2015, P19 & 21

Opportunities and Issues

Development opportunities and issues that have informed the recommendations for the future development of Rakaia Huts are summarised in [Figure 14](#) and below.

OPPORTUNITIES

Population, growth capacity and urban form

- There is an identified need to protect the character and amenity of the township by managing the scale and quantum of development.
- There is support for retaining the existing minimum average allotment size to protect the existing character and amenity of the settlement.

Natural environment and cultural heritage

- There is an opportunity to identify a cultural footprint over the area to recognise the settlement history of Ngāi Tahu and their ancestors in this area and to provide information on that aspect of the township's occupation and history.

Transport

- The levels of service for transport infrastructure should reflect the status, character and function of the settlement.

5 Waters

- Mana whenua support the development of Low Impact Urban Design and Development

ISSUES

Population, growth capacity and urban form

- There is limited capacity for the township to support more intensive housing typologies, such as a Living Z zone, based on the township character, the settlement function in the Selwyn 2031 network and the limited range of services.
- Rakaia Huts is an isolated location that is attractive to a small portion of the property market, with the majority of the properties accommodating holiday homes.
- Natural hazards associated with the identified flood plain to the west of Pacific Drive, or Rakaia River escarpment to the south and the coastal hazard risk to the south-east preclude additional growth in these directions.
- Land tenure and the presence of potentially contaminated land to the north and east of the township limits the quantum and extent to which the current urban form could be extended.

Natural environment and cultural heritage

- There is an identified need to avoid further development that may adversely affect the cultural and heritage values attributed to the identified archaeological and wāhi taonga management areas in and around the township.
- Mana whenua have identified that there are some opportunities to re-establish kāinga nohonga in the area.

- Mana whenua identify issues associated with on-site wastewater disposal fields in areas of cultural significance. Mana whenua's understanding is that it was previously agreed that wastewater was to be reticulated through to Southbridge.
- Mana whenua identify the wider communities lack of understanding of mana whenua cultural values in this area

Transport

- Environment Canterbury does not provide public transport or a bus service to Rakaia Huts. A recent service review undertaken by Environment Canterbury determined that no significant extension or expansion to their services in the District is expected in the foreseeable future.

5 Waters

- There is provision in the Regional Plans for community supply. However, any new groundwater takes to provide for growth will require resource consent with Environment Canterbury. The water supply will be managed in accordance with the approved Water Safety Plan.
- There is an increased risk of flood events and foreshore erosion associated with climatic cycles and increased groundwater levels that may occur as a consequence of the Central Plains water scheme. These factors may inhibit the amount of growth that is sustainable, influences where it is best located and dictate what mitigation measures may be required.
- Environment Canterbury has indicated that higher density housing typologies cannot reasonably be serviced by on-site systems. The retention of the current 800m² minimum average allotment size will make it challenging for on-site wastewater discharge and does not meet the Environment Canterbury permitted activity requirements for new on-site wastewater management.
- Mana whenua identify the need to avoid any adverse effects associated with on-site wastewater disposal fields on sites of cultural significance.
- Any additional growth will require an integrated approach to stormwater management, including the development of stormwater management plans to coherently manage current and future growth.

Business development

- There are limited opportunities to facilitate economic diversity given the scale, function and location of Rakaia Huts.

Local facilities and community development

- The limited population base in Rakaia Huts presents difficulties in generating the rates base to support major capital projects or community facilities, with the funding of improvements to the campground being derived from camp fees only.

Preferred Development Options

There are limited opportunities available for additional greenfield development areas of growth based on the issues identified above and shown on Figure 14.

Conclusion

No new areas for residential or business purposes are required to accommodate growth within Rakaia Huts over the Ellesmere 2031 planning horizon. This is on the basis that there are also a number of issues that need to be addressed to facilitate additional growth, including:

- settlement character and function, including the need to protect the current amenity attributed to Rakaia Huts and the absence of the necessary community infrastructure or services required to support additional growth or increased household densities
- a lack of resilience associated with the settlement's isolated location and local geography
- natural hazard risks, including flooding associated with the Rakaia River and coastal location that may be exacerbated by increased storm events arising as a consequence of climatic cycles and the potential for increased groundwater levels, and
- the need to manage growth to avoid any adverse impacts this may have on cultural sites and mana whenua values attributed to the area. The settlement is a recognised archaeological site and is a registered Wahi Taonga Management Area in the District Plan (C39, C48 and C66).

The retention of the current township boundary through to 2031 is consistent with the principles contained in Chapter 5 of the CRPS, the District Growth Strategy Directions and the Area Plan principles, which reinforce the need to manage growth in an integrated and consolidated manner while avoiding the social, economic and environmental impacts associated with dispersed settlement patterns.

This Area Plan does not preclude any additional greenfield land from being considered for zoning through privately-initiated plan change requests under the RMA, but signals that there is sufficient capacity within the township to accommodate growth through to 2031 without the need for the Council to proactively zone additional land through the District Plan Review.

The following implementation steps identify the various processes for considering the appropriateness of where further development within the current township boundary through to 2031 can best be integrated. The implementation steps are the methods for delivering the opportunities and addressing the issues identified in the above assessment, which will collectively deliver better social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes for the settlement of Rakaia Huts, its community and its rural township function to the local area.

Rakaia Huts area plan implementation steps

A number of implementation steps for Rakaia Huts are provided as a means to realise the Opportunities and address the Issues by 2031. The implementation steps contain guidance on indicative: (1) timeframes; (2) Council department work streams; (3) costs; (4) agency and Council department that are primarily responsible for implementation, and; (5) Possible funding sources.

The various implementation steps have been formulated to deliver sustainable social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes for each township within the Ellesmere Area in the short term, medium term and as done for Malvern townships.

In addition to the Rakaia Huts township specific implementation steps set out below, there are a number of other implementation steps that apply across all the townships subject to the Ellesmere Area Plan. These can be viewed at the beginning of [Section 2](#) of this Area Plan at Table 1.

Estimated costs are shown in the following table as a high-level indication of the scale of funding that may be required to implement various steps. The costs generally relate to physical works, such as street upgrades, open space enhancements or developments of new facilities and do not include the costs to operate, maintain or renew the assets in the future. Possible funding sources for each implementation step are identified.

It is important to note, however, that in many cases no funding has been approved and decisions on whether a project or initiative to deliver the implementation step can proceed will still need to be made through the Council's Annual and Long-Term Planning processes. Also set out in the table is who will be advancing the various implementation steps, and the mechanisms by which they will be realised.

Key for indicative costs
\$ = below \$50,000
\$\$ = \$50,000 – 200,000

Table 5: Implementation steps - Rakaia Huts

Implementation step	Indicative timeframe	Indicative cost	Agency responsible	Funding source
Population, growth and urban form				
See Area Plan wide Implementation Steps in Table 1, in addition to the following:				
Investigate the establishment of a coastal hazard zone	Short	\$\$	Selwyn District Council Planning department, in partnership with Environment Canterbury, and in consultation with mana whenua and other relevant stakeholders	ES DPR
Natural environment and cultural heritage				
See Area Plan wide Implementation Steps in Table 1, in addition to the following:				
Review the non-statutory aspects of the Rakaia Huts Conservation Management Plan, which could include establishing a working party with relevant stakeholders to establish and implement a subsequent works programme	Short	\$	Selwyn District Council Planning department in partnership with mana whenua and Heritage New Zealand – Strategy and Policy Works Programme	Environmental Services Long-Term Plan
Transportation				
See Area Plan wide Implementation Steps in Table 1, in addition to the following:				
5 Waters				
See Area Plan wide Implementation Steps in Table 1, in addition to the following:				
Apply for the necessary stormwater network discharge consents and implement the associated Stormwater Management Plan	Short	\$	Selwyn District Council Water Services department in consultation with mana whenua	Assets Long-Term Plan
Manage the water supply in accordance with the approved Water Safety Plan	Medium	\$	Selwyn District Council Water Services department	Assets Long-Term Plan
Local facilities and community development				
See Area Plan wide Implementation Steps in Table 1, in addition to the following:				
Progress community facility upgrades as set out in the 2015-25 Long-Term Plan, including specifically implementing the budgeted camp ground facilities upgrade	Short	\$	Selwyn District Council Property and Commercial department – Long-Term Plan 2015-2025	Property and Commercial Long-Term Plan
Investigate opportunities to enhance the local walkway network	Short	\$	Selwyn District Council Property and Commercial department to establish a forum comprising Selwyn District Council, Department of Conservation, mana whenua and community representatives	Property and Commercial Long-Term Plan