A large, mature tree with vibrant green foliage is the central focus of the image. The tree has a thick, dark trunk and a dense canopy of leaves. In the background, a residential street with houses and a paved road is visible. The overall scene is bright and clear, suggesting a sunny day.

Amenity



Amenity

Key Issues:

Amenity values refer to the natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to an appreciation of its pleasantness, and cultural and recreational values. For example, in a residential area amenity values might be formed by front garden settings, building setbacks, views, and the quiet environment. The amenity values of urban areas could be adversely affected by unsuitable development. Amenity in rural areas may be compromised by rural activities that generate noise, odour, dust and other effects. In general there is a higher tolerance of the effects of legitimate farming activities. In residential areas, the effects of industrial and commercial activities on amenity values are also expected to be avoided, remedied or mitigated. Are the objectives, policies and anticipated environmental results which seek to maintain or enhance the amenity of both the urban and rural areas of our District being achieved?



Indicators:



Pressures:

- Number of resource consent applications to breach development standards (e.g. daylight admission, bulk and location requirements);
- Number of resource consent applications received for offsite signage; and
- Number of resource consents granted for the removal of notable trees.

State:

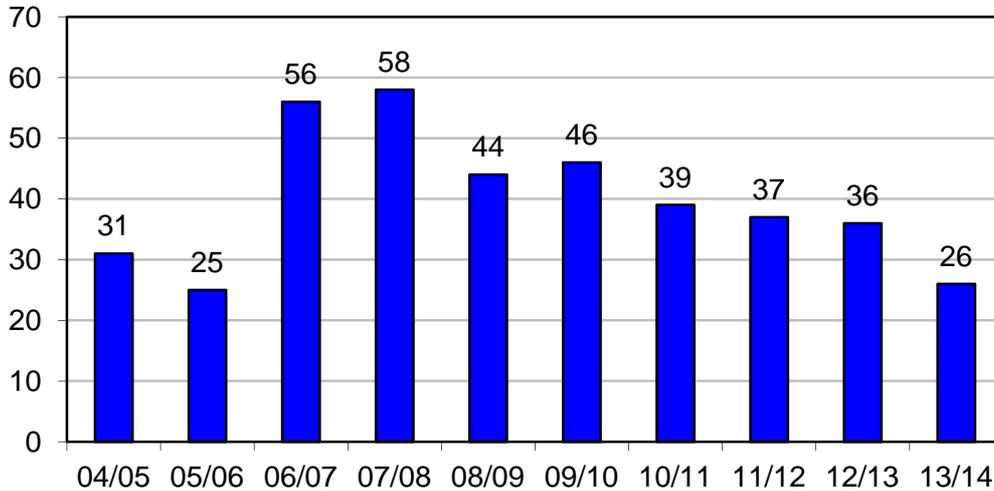
- Number of complaints received concerning amenity values e.g. noise, dust, odour, glare, vibration, chemical/effluent spray drift, signage; and
- Number of scheduled protected trees.

Response:

- Number of resource consent conditions imposed to control noise, dust, odour, glare, vibration, spray drift, and signage.

Results:

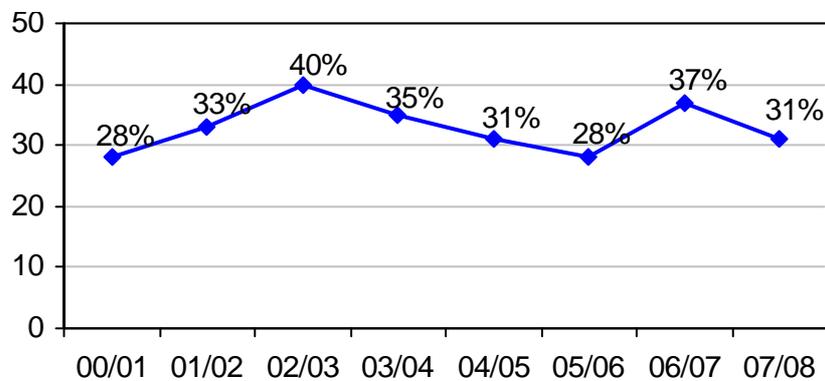
Number of resource consent applications to breach development standards (e.g. daylight admission and bulk and location requirements)



The number of resource consent applications to breach Council's development standards increased significantly in the 2006/07, and 2007/08 years. This increase was likely related to the increase in houses being built during that period. During 2008/09 and 2009/10 the number of consents to breach standards has remained higher than usual (around the mid-40's per year). Subsequent to 2009/10 there has been a year-on-year decrease in the number of resource consents to breach the Plan's development standards. The decrease is likely due to a reduction in the number of houses built, following the global financial crises.

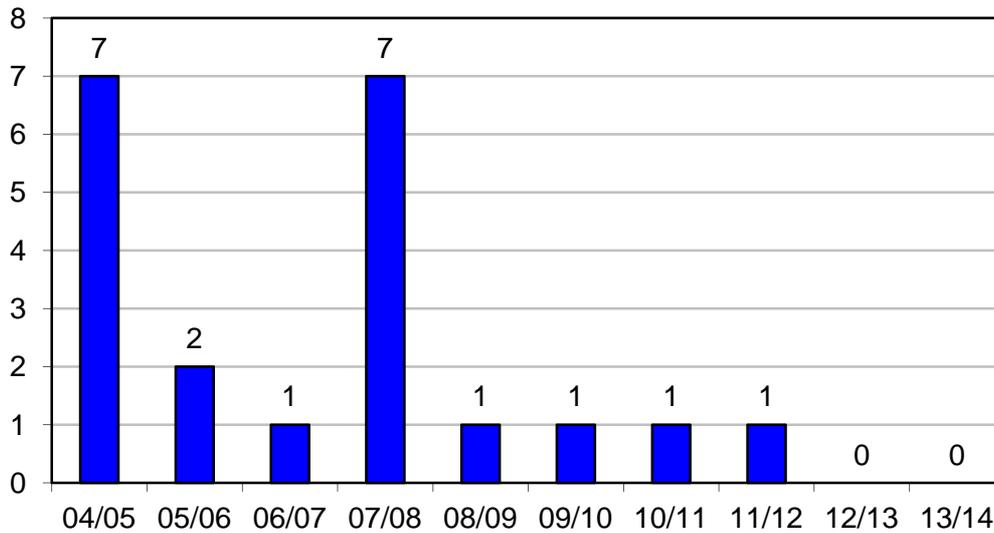
The majority of development standards that were allowed to be breached were for resource consents wanting to encroach into boundary requirements.

Percentage of resource consent applications to breach development standards (e.g. daylight admission, bulk and location requirements)



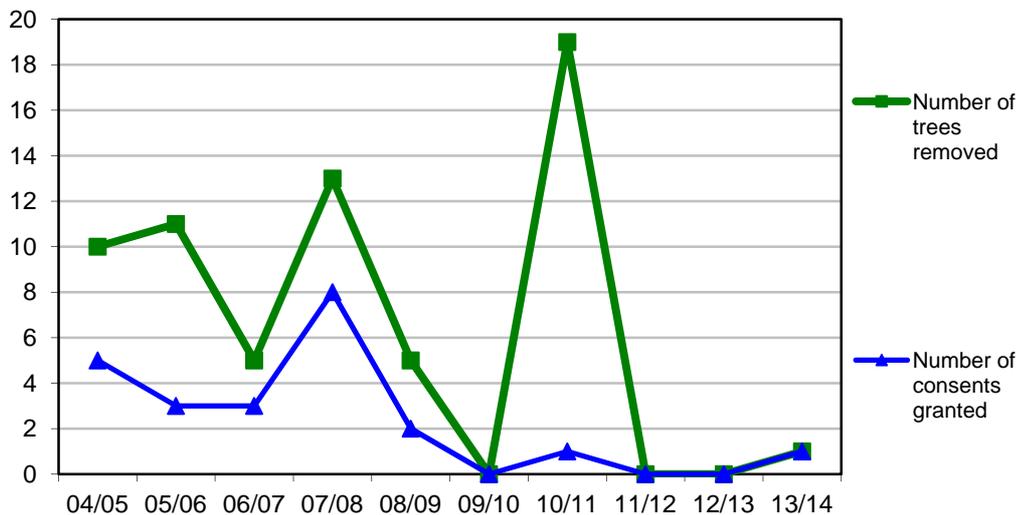
The Figure above shows the percentage of resource consents approved to breach development standards out of the total number approved. The graph shows that generally, 30% - 40% of all consents granted, was for breaches in the Plan's development standards.

Number of resource consent applications received for off-site signage



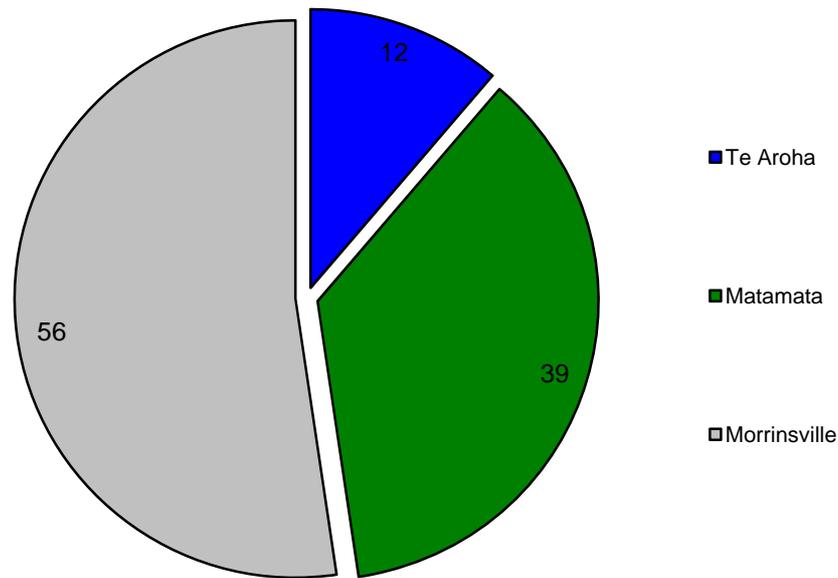
Increased signage and advertising can also impact upon the visual amenity and traffic safety of the environment. There were 7 applications for resource consent to permit offsite signage in 2007/08. Subsequently, there was only one resource consent application for offsite signage for each of the years 2008/09 – 2011/12. For the years 2012/13 and 2013/14 there have not been any applications for resource consents for offsite signage.

Number of Resource Consents granted for removal of notable trees



Removing trees can have an impact on amenity values. During 2008/09 two consents were granted, for the removal of 5 trees. During 2009/10, no consents were granted and no trees removed. In 2010/11 one consent was granted, for the removal of 19 trees. In 2011/12 and 2012/13 no consents were granted and no trees removed. During 2013/14 one consent was granted, and 1 tree removed.

Location of notable trees removed 2000/01–2013/14



The pie-chart in the Figure above shows that during the period 2000/01 – 2013/14 a total of 107 trees were removed. Of the total, 56 were in Morrinsville, 39 in Matamata, and 12 in Te Aroha. The majority of these trees were removed from urban areas, where it was considered that the visual impact on the township was no more than minor.

Results Discussion:

During 2008 Council completed a plan change to amend the tree protection provisions within the Plan. The plan change sought to delete the “blanket” tree protection rules in line with the imminent changes to the RMA, anticipated at the time.

The intent of the plan change (and indeed the amendment to the RMA) was to reduce the high transaction costs caused by the large number of resource consents required due to blanket tree protection rules in urban environments.

Previously you needed to get a resource consent to remove, or do any major work to any tree over 10 metres in height. This was deemed to be too restrictive. The plan change, in line with the then anticipated amendments to the RMA identified specific trees/ groups of trees which added to the amenity of the District and these were added to the schedule of outstanding or significant natural features and trees and other protected items.

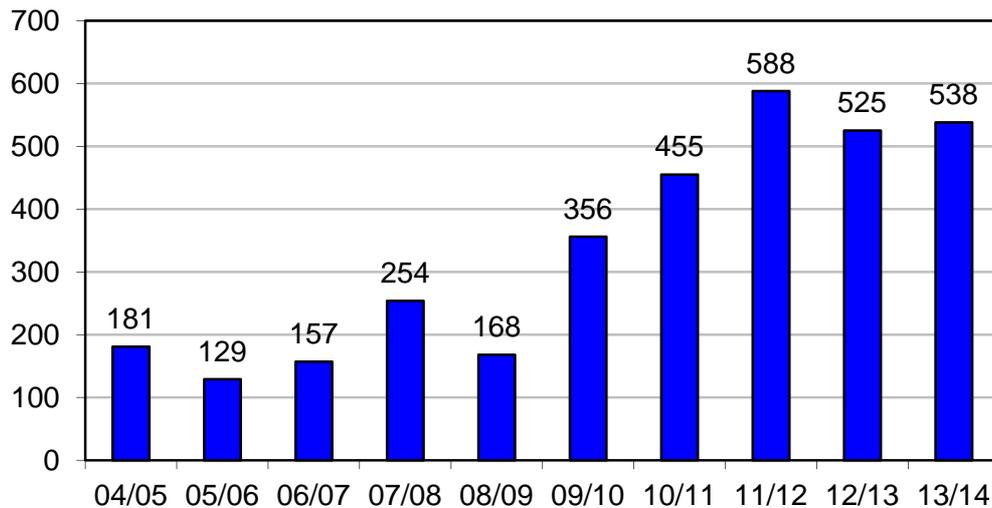
The plan change aimed to give confidence as to whether or not you would need resource consent to remove a tree, to remove any unnecessary restrictions, and to ensure that the Plan was in line with the then imminent RMA amendments.

Since the above plan change became operative, 19 trees were removed in 2010/11 due to the construction of a waste water treatment plant. The trees were seen as being significant because they were part of the woodlot, but did not have individual significance, and replanting with 38 trees was seen as an effective mitigation measure. Ever since the blanket tree protection rules have been deleted from the Plan and other than for the exception above, few applications to remove the specifically scheduled trees have been made, and few trees removed.

The Council is currently reviewing the operative schedule of significant trees to ensure that the trees currently scheduled remain significant and thus worthy of continued protection, and/or whether any additional trees not already listed are worthy of conservation.

Depending on the outcome of the above review, the Council may initiate a further plan change process to amend the schedule of significant trees.

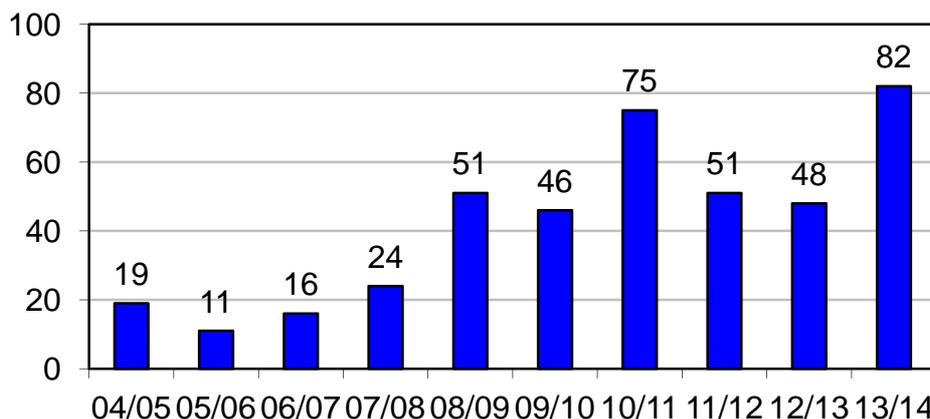
Number of complaints received concerning amenity values



The bar chart above shows the number of complaints concerning amenity values received during each financial year. The chart shows that the number of complaints has increased significantly since 2008/09, peaked during 2011/12, then “dropped off” marginally but still recording high numbers (in the 500’s) during 2012/13 and 2013/14.

The majority of the complaints relate to noise disturbance, specifically loud stereo noise. In 2013/14 year, more than 90% of complaints were related to excessive noise, while the remaining complaints were regarding matters such as dust, odour or noise from industry or building noise in general. There were no complaints recorded specifically regarding development exceeding minimum standards.

Number of resource consent conditions imposed to control noise, dust, odour, glare, vibration, spray drift and signage



Participation in protecting the environment

In the Matamata-Piako District in 2000, 18% of residents had taken action to protect the environment and 42% of those people believed their action was effective.

In 2003, 16% of residents had taken direct action for the protection of the environment through methods such as attending meetings, preparing submissions or writing to Council. Of the residents that had taken direct action, 49% believed that their actions were effective. 14% of respondents had not taken any action to protect the environment.

In 2006, of the respondents who had been involved in public action, 87% of these perceived the effectiveness of the public action to be “fairly” or “very” effective. This is a significant increase from 2003.

In 2013, some survey questions were worded differently from those in the earlier surveys, and the overall percentage of people who took action to protect the environment was no longer recorded. However, the following statistics were recorded:

- 8% of residents were involved in public action or meetings.
- of those residents who had taken public action, 39% were on a committee or attended a meeting, and 30% participated in an action group.
- 50% of people who were involved in public action perceived the effectiveness of that action to be “very effective”.

Matamata-Piako Residents’ perception of their local environment

In a 2007 survey of residents’ perception of their local environment, conducted in conjunction with other territorial authorities within the Waikato Region and the Waikato Regional Council, 83% of Matamata-Piako respondents were satisfied with the unique or special character of their “home” town. The same survey, repeated in 2010, showed that the level of satisfaction had decreased to 74%, but by 2013 the figure had again increased to 76.4%.

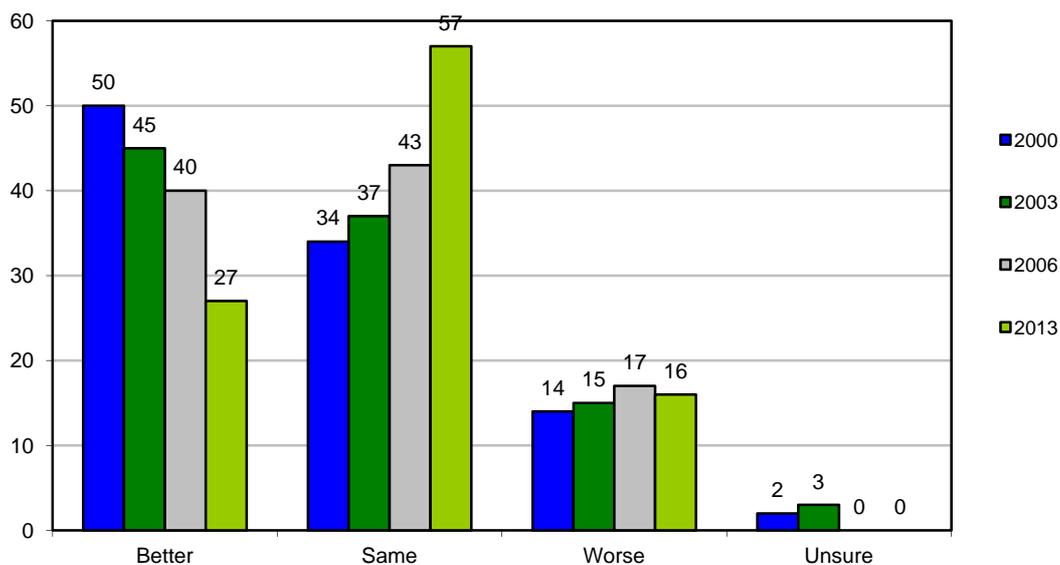
The 2013 survey also asked *‘how strongly do you agree or disagree that you feel a sense of pride in the way your district looks and feels’*. In response to this question, 76% agreed, which is consistent with the survey in 2007 and 2010.

In 2000, 2003, 2006, and 2013 the Waikato Regional Council surveyed a sample of the Region’s population to get their views on environmental issues. The most important environmental issues that were identified by Matamata-Piako residents are shown in the Table below. Water pollution/ water quality was consistently identified by respondents as the top environmental issue, for each of the years surveyed.

2000	2003	2006	2013
Water Pollution – 28%	Water Pollution – 25%	Water Quality and Supply – 19%	Water – Pollution/Quality – 32%
			Water – availability and suitability for use – 19%
Waste Disposal – 27%	Sprays and Pesticides – 6%	Water Pollution – 15%	
General Pollution – 8%	General Pollution – 6%	Don’t Know/ No Reply – 10%	Don’t Know – 15%
Air Pollution – 6%	Rubbish Disposal – 6%	Air Pollution – 8%	Drought – 10%
Don’t Know – 14%	Animal Pest and Disease – 4%	Effluent disposal/ run off- 8%	Waikato River – 5%

The above survey also asked residents if they thought the overall state of their local environment had improved. The results of the survey are shown in the bar chart below. The chart shows that, since 2000 the number of Matamata-Piako residents who consider the overall state of their local environment to have improved has decreased steadily. However, an increasing number of people consider that the overall state of the environment is the same, and about the same number of people think it is worse.

Community perception of the change in the overall state of the environment 2000–2013



District Plan Provisions

Section 2.4 - Sustainable Management Strategy

Objective:

- To protect identified central business areas from activities that are out of character with existing amenity values.

Policy:

- To avoid the development of activities which adversely affect the character of the "mainstreet" shopping environment.

Objective:

- To enable the orderly and coherent development of processing and extractive industry in a manner that promotes the sustainable management of natural and physical resources in the rural areas.

Policy:

- The adverse effects of processing and extractive industries should be avoided, remedied or mitigated in accordance with the amenity values of the adjacent community.

Anticipated Environmental Results:

- A reduction in the number of complaints from the public concerning the adverse effects of activities.

Section 3.1.2 Natural environment and heritage

Objective:

- To retain and enhance the varied landscape qualities of the district.

Policy:

- The scale, location and design of buildings, structures and activities in outstanding landscape types of the district should:
 - preserve the elements which contribute to its natural character; and
 - not detract from the amenity values of the landscape.

Anticipated Environmental Results:

- Visual amenity of significant landscape areas is unchanged or improved (typical performance measure: area of land disturbed by visually obtrusive activities or uses).

Section 3.5 Amenity

Objective:

- To maintain and enhance a high standard of amenity in the built environment without constraining development innovation and building variety.

Policy:

- To ensure that development in residential and rural areas achieves adequate levels of daylight admission, privacy and open space for development sites and adjacent properties.

Objective:

- To minimise the adverse effects created by building scale or dominance, shading, building location and site layout.

Policies:

- To minimise the effects created by building scale, overshadowing, and building bulk in business, industrial and recreational areas;
- To maintain the open space character of residential and rural areas by ensuring that development is compatible in scale to surrounding activities and structures;
- To recognise that the low density urban form in the District's towns contributes to the amenity and character of the area; and
- To provide for development within the District in a manner that encourages flexibility and innovation in design and variety in the built form while achieving the anticipated environmental results.

Anticipated Environmental Results:

- Improved public perception of general amenity in the built environment, particularly urban areas (typical performance measure: reduction in number of submissions lodged (and complaints related to) development proposals – see also Section 14: Monitoring); and
- Evolution of a more interesting and varied urban form (typical performance measure: extent to which development applications comply with and exceed minimum standards – see also Section 14: Monitoring).

Objective:

- To ensure that the design and appearance of buildings and sites is in keeping with the character of the surrounding townscape and landscape.

Policy:

- To encourage a high standard of on-site amenity in residential, business, recreational and industrial areas.

Objective:

- To recognise and promote the special urban character of Te Aroha and Matamata and to develop the urban character of Morrinsville.

Policies:

- To recognise and enhance the historical character of the built form at Te Aroha;
- To recognise and enhance the open space "garden city" character of the built form at Matamata;
- To achieve a compatible and consistent urban form through the utilisation of design guidelines for special character areas;
- To encourage a varied and interesting built form by supporting initiatives and providing development amenity incentives for comprehensive and innovative subdivision and development design;
- To maintain and enhance the predominant domestic character of residential areas.

Anticipated Environmental Results:

- Maintenance and enhancement of building, site and visual appearance in rural, residential and business areas;
- Retention of the special heritage character of Te Aroha, the "garden city" character of Matamata and introduction of the mainstreet concept in Morrinsville.

Objective:

- To ensure that residences are free from the effects of unreasonable and excessive noise, odour, dust, glare and vibration.

Policy:

- To protect residential and rural amenity by the use of performance standards for noise, glare, odour, particulates and vibration control which generally ensure that generated effects do not exceed background or ambient levels.
- To ensure that appropriate buffers and other mitigation measures are established between incompatible activities and zones.

Objective:

- To provide healthy and safe working, living and recreational environments by avoiding and mitigating the effect of excessive noise, vibration, odour and dust.

Policy:

- To ensure that activities in business, rural, industrial and recreational areas avoid, remedy or mitigate generated effects to maintain and enhance a healthy, safe and pleasant environment and take all reasonable steps to internalise any nuisance effects.

Objective:

- To recognise the existing character of rural areas and acknowledge that some adverse effects will arise from rural activities that may require management.

Policy:

- To reinforce existing mitigation measures, and to encourage those who generate the nuisance effect to maintain and enhance those measures, including separation between industry, public or designated works or intensive farming operations and Residential zones and the notional boundaries about rural residences.
- To maintain rural amenity while acknowledging that lawfully established activities in the rural area may generate effects such as odour, noise, dust and vibration which are generally not anticipated in urban areas.

Objective:

- To ensure that lawfully established activities which generate minor nuisance effects are not unreasonably compromised by the proximity or action of neighbouring land-users or non-rural activities.

Policy:

- To avoid, remedy or mitigate significant adverse noise, odour, dust, glare and vibration effects generated by rural activities and other activities in rural areas.

Objective:

- To ensure that the effects of chemical and effluent spray application and spray drift are avoided, remedied or mitigated.

Policy:

- To support initiatives aimed at reducing the use of toxic agricultural chemicals and sprays.
- To avoid the establishment of high polluting industries in the District.

Objective:

- To ensure that subdivision and land use activities are located and sited in a manner that recognises existing and planned transport networks.

Anticipated Environmental Results:

- Reduced incidence of nuisance affecting residential, business and recreational areas (typical performance measure: reduction in number of complaints lodged with Council – see also Section 14: Monitoring).
- Longer-term improvements in environmental health and safety due to reduced rural nuisance and improved management of agricultural spray usage and application.

Objective:

- To minimise the adverse effects of signage on the character of rural, residential, industrial and business areas.

Policy:

- To restrict the number and size of signs in rural, residential, industrial and business areas to avoid cluttering of the landscape.

Objective:

- To ensure that signs and business advertising do not compromise visual amenity and traffic safety.

Policies:

- To avoid the visual impact and traffic safety impacts of general advertising by adoption of a site dependency criteria for all signage for rural, residential and business areas;
- To utilise design guidelines to ensure that signage is sympathetic to other building forms in special character areas;
- To avoid the adverse effects of advertising in the air space over and above land activities; and
- To ensure that traffic safety is maintained by carefully managing the location and design of any signs visible from arterial and principal roadways.

Anticipated Environmental Results:

- Minimal adverse visual amenity and traffic safety effects from signs and advertising (typical performance measures: reduction in number of complaints related to size and location of signs. Reduction in number of arterial road accidents which can be attributed to advertising or signage distractions – see also Section 14: Monitoring).

Efficiency and Effectiveness

Are the Plan's objectives and policies the most effective and efficient way to achieve the following anticipated environmental results?

- *A reduction in the number of complaints from the public concerning the adverse effects of activities;*
- *Improved public perception of general amenity in the built environment, particularly urban areas;*
- *Evolution of a more interesting and varied urban form;*
- *Maintenance and enhancement of building, site and visual appearance in rural, residential and business areas;*
- *Retention of the special heritage character of Te Aroha, the "garden city" character of Matamata and introduction of the Mainstreet concept in Morrinsville;*
- *Reduced incidence of nuisance affecting residential, business and recreational areas; and*
- *Minimal adverse visual amenity and traffic safety effects from signs and advertising.*

Amenity values are the natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people's appreciation of its pleasantness and its cultural and recreational values. Having a safe and healthy environment for living, working and recreation is important for Matamata-Piako residents. This involves maintaining generous access to daylight, sunlight and private open space, especially in urban areas. Amenity values can differ in rural areas to those in urban areas, as people in rural areas commonly both live and work on the land, and can be involved in activities that generate noise, odour, dust and other effects. The maintenance and enhancement of amenity values is a particular matter which the RMA requires Council to have particular regard to (see section 7(a) of the RMA).

Residents place a high value on their residential privacy and consider that generous access to daylight, sunlight and private open space must be maintained. The number of resource consent applications to breach development standards has steadily decreased since 2009/10. The majority of development standards that were allowed to be breached were for consents wanting to encroach boundary requirements for buildings.

Therefore the objective *'to minimise the adverse effects created by building scale or dominance, shading, building location and site layout'* is seen to be effective as there has been a decline in the number of consents granted to breach development standards.

Objectives and policies controlling amenity seeks to improve public perception of general amenity in the built environment. This can be measured by the number of complaints received related to amenity values. The number of complaints has increased from 2009/10 (356 complaints), to a high of 588 in 2011/12. During 2012/13 and 2013/14 the number has remained high at respectively 525 and 538. This seems to be reasonably high, however noise is included in the total number of complaints with the majority of complaints received relating to noisy stereos and parties. It is recognised that there are also external factors other than the District Plan affecting the number of complaints such as the changing perceptions of amenity.

The community does not perceive the overall state of the environment to have worsened during the period 2006 – 2013. This seems to indicate that the AERs are effectively being achieved by the current policies which seek to:

- Minimise the effects created by the built environment,
- Ensure that residents are free from the effects of unreasonable and excessive noise, odour, dust, glare, vibration, and
- Ensure that we live in a healthy, safe and pleasant environment.

Council is able to impose conditions on new developments to reduce impacts on amenity. The number of conditions placed on resource consents to control; noise, dust, odour, glare, vibration, spray drift and signage has increased significantly in the years post-2007/08. Imposing conditions is an effective way for Council to ensure that the objectives, policies and anticipated environmental results are achieved in regards to new developments. Imposing conditions is considered to be the most efficient way of protecting amenity values because developers are required to internalise the cost of mitigating, remedying or avoiding adverse amenity effects. If we had no amenity policies and rules to follow and it was left up to the owner to decide, then amenity values could decrease considerably and could potentially be lost forever. Before this plan was put into place there were no real amenity controls in place and dispensation rules were almost never broken under previous legislation. Current legislation allows for more flexibility, based on effects rather than rules.

The Plan seeks to protect the amenity and heritage values of our towns from the effects of unsuitable development. The Plan recognises the contribution of some special amenity values and heritage characteristics to the wider amenity of the District. Objectives and policies concerning the design and appearance of buildings and sites, compatibility with the character of the surrounding townscape and landscape, and recognising and promoting the special urban character of our towns appear to be effective.

In a Perception Survey conducted in conjunction with other local authorities within the Waikato Region in 2013, 76% of Matamata-Piako respondents were satisfied with the unique or special character of their town. This was up slightly from 74% satisfaction in the 2010 survey. The 2013 survey also found that 76% of respondents agreed that they had “a sense of pride in the way the District felt and looked”.

The Te Aroha Character Area is a zoning placed on the central business area in Te Aroha, effectively requiring resource consent to undertake any alterations deemed more than minor, redecoration, repair and/or insignificant alteration. These rules are effective as few resource consents have been applied for and granted to modify scheduled buildings within the Character Area.

The garden concept for Matamata is being retained and this concept is being picked up through urban design of both new and infill developments within the town. For example this is occurring in the Banks Road and Precinct F (Station Road) developments.

Increased signage and advertising can impact on visual amenity and traffic safety. Few resource consents were received since 2008/09. Therefore one can conclude that the requirements are effectively achieving the anticipated environmental result of ‘minimal adverse visual amenity and traffic safety effects from signs and advertising’. This result is successfully achieved through the implementation of policies to restrict the number and size of signs to avoid cluttering of the landscape and this is implemented through effective regulatory rules.

In 2008 Council completed a plan change to amend the tree protection provisions and add significant trees to the schedule for our towns. The objective of the plan change was to provide a level of protection for notable trees without being unnecessarily restrictive. This has been effective as it meets the objectives and policies of the Plan and ensures that the requirements of the RMA are met. The registering of trees gave residents the opportunity to ‘buy into’ the protection and provides more certainty as to whether a resource consent is required.

In addition, Plan Change 41 is now operative. This plan change incorporated urban design guidelines into the Plan.

Plan Change 41 also formally incorporated the MPDC Development Manual into the District Plan. The incorporation of the Development Manual enables consistency in development standards across the District.

Summary

Anticipated Environmental Results Amenity	Achieved? ☺ - Achieving → - Progress towards achievement ☹ - Not achieving ? - Not monitored
A reduction in the number of complaints from the public concerning the adverse effects of activities	☹ (Increase in complaints – although likely due in part to increase in noise complaints, and higher community expectations)
Improved public perception of general amenity in the built environment, particularly urban areas	→ (No change in the number of respondents that perceive the overall state of the environment to be worse)
Evolution of a more interesting and varied urban form	☺ (76% of respondents feel a sense of pride in the District)
Maintenance and enhancement of building, site and visual appearance in rural, residential and business areas	☺ (76% of respondents feel a sense of pride in the District)
Retention of the special heritage character of Te Aroha, the "garden city" character of Matamata and introduction of the mainstreet concept in Morrinsville	☺ (76% of respondents are satisfied with the unique character of their town)
Reduced incidence of nuisance affecting residential, business and recreational areas	☹ (Increase in complaints)
Minimal adverse visual amenity and traffic safety effects from signs and advertising	☺ (Few consents for off-site signage granted)
Establishment of increasing number of innovative and comprehensive residential development with generous amenity provision	?
Longer term improvements in environmental health and safety due to reduced rural nuisance and improved management of agricultural spray usage and application	?
Visual amenity of significant landscape areas is unchanged or improved	?
Increase in number of trees planted in the district by Council and private landowners	?