

# Woodlands Estate Historic Reserve Management Plan



December 2020

**Reserve Management Plan Process**

Plan Review Notified	November 2018
Draft Prepared	June 2019
Public Consultation	October – December 2019
Public Hearing	May 2020
Plan Adopted	December 2020

## Foreword from the Mayor

We are privileged to live in a diverse district with many wonderful parks and reserves close to our homes.

Waikato District Council acknowledges that the reserve land known as Woodlands Estate Historic Reserve in Gordonton was part of a larger area of land confiscated from local hapuu and mana whenua during the 1863 land wars between the Kiingitanga coalition of chiefs and the British-led government.

Through Crown land grants to European settlers, the confiscated land was subsequently developed into farmland, with only a small portion of these confiscated lands returned to the former Maaori owners<sup>1</sup>.

Council also acknowledges the gift of the farm - homestead and land from Irene Riddell to the Presbyterian Support Services in 1983, and the further gifting and transfer of the homestead to the Waikato County Council in 1989, to preserve and ensure public access to the heritage features of the homestead and gardens.

This is the second reserve management plan prepared for the Woodlands Estate Historic Reserve, and we appreciate the support of the Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board, Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, and input sought from mana whenua, Ngaati Wairere, in preparing this reserve management plan.

We are committed to ensuring that Ngaati Wairere, are involved in the future management of the reserve, in particular acknowledging their cultural, traditional, historical and spiritual association to the wider land area that has been associated with Woodlands Estate Historic Reserve.

I encourage everyone to visit this reserve, to explore the homestead and experience the different seasons in the gardens, and to understand that the Waikato was and still is a food bowl for mana whenua and all people of the district. Woodlands is a place for our community, and visitors to our district, to gather and appreciate the cultural and historical significance of the area, enjoy the recreational opportunities on offer, and cherish the natural beauty on display.

Waikato District Council took over the maintenance of the grounds and gardens at Woodlands Estate Historic Reserve in 2016.

We regard it as one of our premier parks, so the management of it, both now and into the future, is crucial in helping us achieve our vision for the Waikato District – creating liveable, thriving and connected communities.



**Allan Sanson, Mayor**

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<sup>1</sup> Of the 4,869 sq km of land confiscated, only 1,273 sq km (26%) was returned to Waikato Maaori (or as claimed by Waikato-Tainui, to Maaori who were not the correct owners). Reference: [www.nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/treaty/treaty-in-practice/waikato-tainui](http://www.nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/treaty/treaty-in-practice/waikato-tainui)

## **Woodlands Estate Historic Reserve**

### **Key Partners:**

Waikato District Council

Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board

Ngaati Wairere – Hukanui Marae

### **Key Stakeholders:**

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga

New Zealand Gardens Trust

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## **1.0 Introduction**

Woodlands Estate Historic Reserve is of significance to European settlers of the Waikato in terms of its historic, heritage, social, natural, and recreation values.

The wider historical context of Woodlands Estate origin and development is the earlier confiscation of the land from Maaori – by the Crown, who then on-sold the land to those who developed it into productive farmland.

Situated near the settlement of Gordonton (formerly Hukanui) Woodlands Estate was a part of the early European settlement and farming of the Waikato district between the Waikato and Piako Rivers.

Heritage values include the historic Woodlands homestead which was originally built in the 1870's with the surrounding gardens being developed over time.

The natural values of this reserve include the woodland trees, planted displays, magnificent oak trees, and display gardens.

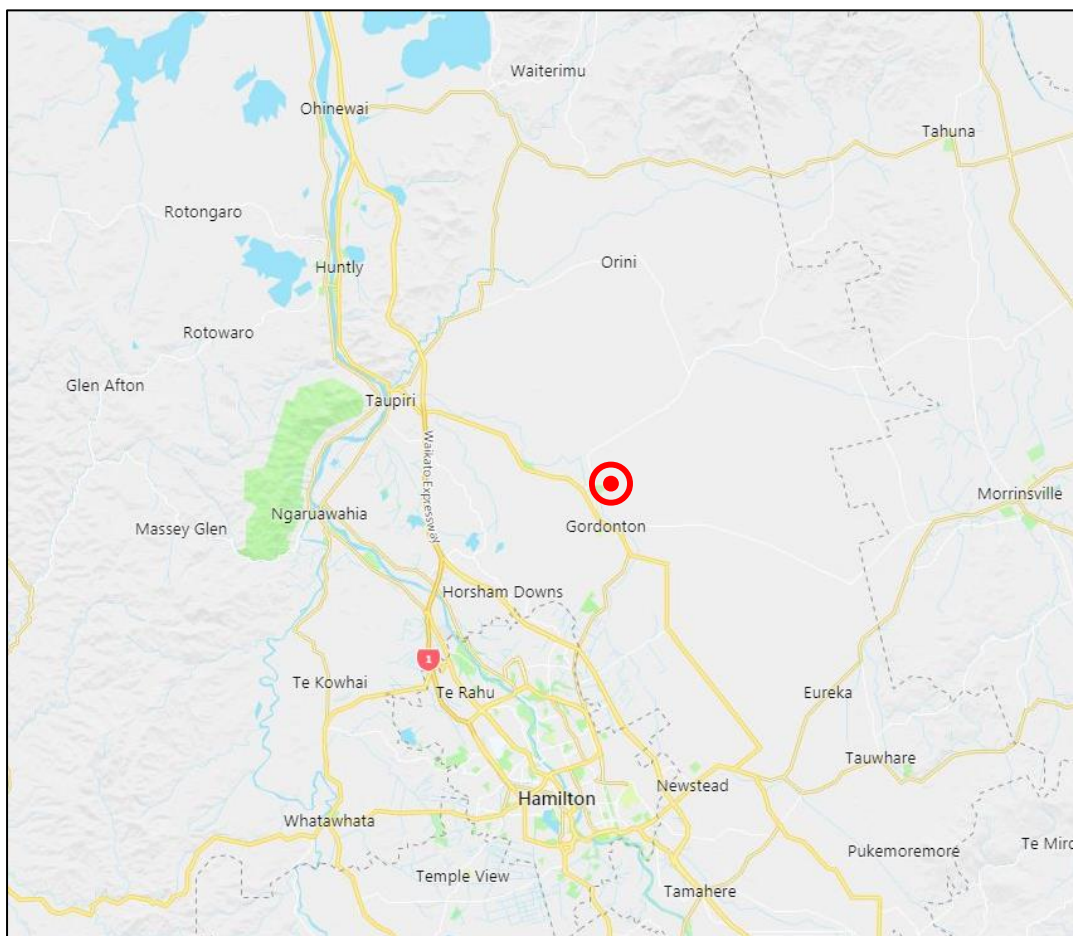
The remnants of the former Woodlands Estate now forms a public reserve managed by the Waikato District Council along with the Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board. The reserve provides recreation opportunities for people to visit the historic homestead and period gardens, and attend events for public or private occasions.

This reserve management plan outlines the management and future direction of this reserve.

## 2.0 Purpose of this plan

This reserve management plan outlines the Waikato District Council (Councils) and community vision for Woodlands Estate Historic Reserve (Woodlands). The plan collates ideas and feedback from community consultation and professional landscape analysis to address issues and opportunities for the reserve. This historical reserve provides recreation and leisure opportunities for local residents and visitors, and is highly valued for its early European heritage and landscape features.

Woodlands, located at 42 Whitikahu Road, Gordonton, includes a historic homestead and gardens located in a rural setting. This is the second reserve management plan prepared for Woodlands with the first plan being adopted in 1991.



Map 1: Woodlands Estate Historic Reserve location in the Waikato region

The Reserves Act 1977 requires the preparation and review of management plans on a regular basis, as the plans is an important park management tool. Management plans are developed in consultation with park users, community and key stakeholder groups, with consideration to current management of a reserve. A management plan will provide for continuity between legislative requirements, Council plans and policies, and the day-to-day operation of a reserve.



This management plan should be kept under continuous review to ensure that the policies are appropriate and relevant for Woodlands, with a comprehensive review undertaken every five years.

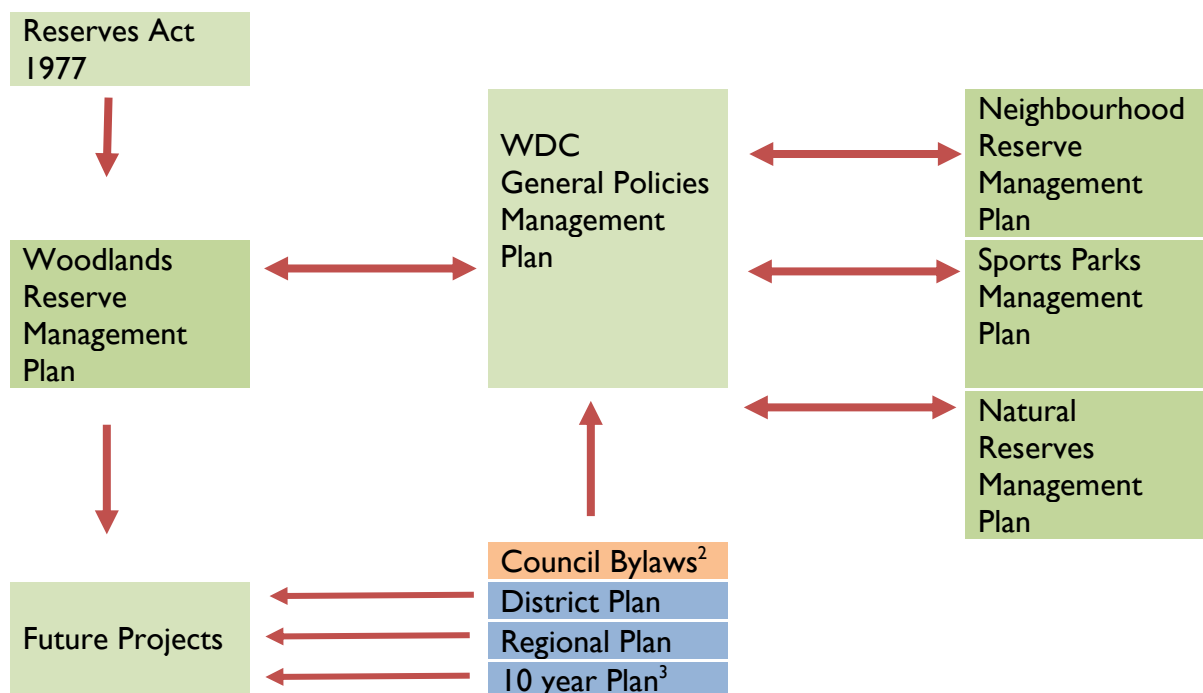
## 2.1 Relationship with Other Council Documents

This plan has been aligned to, and is guided by Councils current plans and policies, including Long Term and District Plans, and Council bylaws.

This reserve management plan is to be read in conjunction with:

- the Waikato District Council General Policies Reserves Management Plan,
- the Woodlands Conservation Plan, and
- the Woodlands Garden Plan.

The General Policies Reserve Management Plan 2015 applies to all reserves within the Waikato district. Where there is a conflict between the general policies contained within the General Policies and the specific polices contained within this plan, the specific policies will take precedence.



<sup>2</sup> Current (2019) Bylaws include: Dog Control Bylaw 2015, Freedom Camping Bylaw 2016, Public Places Bylaw 2016, Reserves and Beaches Bylaw 2016.

Current Council Policies include: Activity Management Policy, Bi Lingual Sign Policy, District Tree Policy, Heritage Policy, Plaques, Memorial and Monuments Policy

<sup>3</sup> Current Council plans/strategies include: Parks Strategy, Playground Strategy, Toilet Strategy



## 2.2 Waikato-Tainui Joint Management Agreement

Council and Waikato-Tainui have entered into a Joint Management Agreement in accordance with the Waikato-Tainui Raupatu Claims (Waikato River) Settlement Act 2010. The agreement acknowledges that Council has rights and responsibilities with regard to management of reserves under Reserves Act 1977.

In accordance with the Waikato Raupatu Claims Settlement Act 1995, Council has informed the Waikato Raupatu River Trust of its intention to prepare a reserve management plan.

### 2.2.1 Waikato -Tainui Hapuu Agreements

Through the process of consultation, Council acknowledges the relationship between various Waikato-Tainui Hapuu with Woodlands.

The following Hapuu and marae have identified their relationship to Woodlands, and may formalise this through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with a primary goal of ensuring that they and Council will actively engage with each other in good faith on issues affecting this reserve and any outcomes identified through this plan.

- a. Hukanui Marae – Ngaati Wairere
- b. Tauhei Marae – Ngaati Wairere



Woodlands garden area known as The Oaks

## **2.3 Council and Delegations**

The Minister of Conservation has delegated a number of procedural and decision-making responsibilities to Council under the Reserves Act 1977. These delegations are made to “Council as a whole” and cannot be delegated to committees of Council or staff. Decisions that must be made by a meeting of the full Council (Council as a whole) include adoption of reserve management plans, classification of reserves and granting of leases.

Other decisions, such as approval for events, removal of trees, issuing of permits etc. can be delegated from the Council to the Chief Executive and to the Parks and Facilities staff. As delegations change from time to time, the term Council is used throughout the document. Staff should refer to the Delegations Manual to determine if they have the authority to make decisions in accordance with the policies in this reserve management plan.

## **2.4 Implementation**

This reserve management plan provides objectives and policies that determine the appropriate use, protection and development of Woodlands by Council. Decisions relating to the funding and priority for works described in this plan will be undertaken within Council’s Long Term Plan and Annual Plan. Inclusion of any project within this reserve management plan does not indicate Council funding will be available for such works as works may be funded and delivered by parties other than Council.

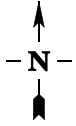
The whole site is a recorded archaeological site (514/283). The requirements of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, to obtain an archaeological authority to modify recorded and unrecorded archaeological sites may be applicable to works undertaken at Woodlands. As the entire site is archeologically sensitive it is considered that an Archaeological authority will be sought to cover all works proposed on the site. The consideration of the potential for the presence of archaeological sites at an early stage enables avoiding modifying any sites through good project planning.

This plan describes how the area is to be managed and developed. The plan does not commit the Council to undertaking any particular works. Instead it will enable the Council to determine what works should be undertaken when funding becomes available. The information and policies of the Woodlands Conservation Plan should be considered and implemented as part of any proposed works on the Woodlands Estate.

## **2.5 Legal Status**

Woodlands consists of three separate land titles. Two of the titles are vested in Council as historic reserve. A third section of land is held as fee simple, with the intention when this land was purchased (1999) to have it classified as historic reserve.

Council intends to classify and gazette this land as historic reserve.



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## 3.0 Woodlands Estate

### 3.1 Historical Significance

Ngaati Wairere moved out of the Kirikiriroa / Hamilton area in 1864 during the land wars, where they established a new pa at Hukanui<sup>4</sup>.

Hukanui marae and Tauhei marae are both situated in close proximity to Woodlands. The area is culturally and historically significant to all local tangata whenua. The land provided a food source and links to other mana whenua across the Waikato region.

Woodlands has a high level of European historical importance, particularly through the establishment of the surrounding peat and swamps into farmland.

The New Zealand Historic Places Trust describe Woodlands as nationally significant; the large Victorian dwelling, surrounded by extensive grounds was the centrepiece of a large agricultural estate, developed as one of the largest private land drainage and reclamation projects in the country. The Woodlands Estate is significant for its associations with the Piako Swamp Company, later known as the Waikato Land Association, a syndicate of wealthy businessmen, who invested in large tracts of land in the Waikato, following confiscations after the Waikato War in 1863. Woodlands was one of four agricultural estates developed by the Piako Swamp Company, following extensive drainage works to convert the swampy land for farming. Woodlands became significant as the headquarters for the company after the sale of the Eureka Station in 1880.

Woodlands is of significance for its associations with the Piako Swamp Company and the businessmen who formed part of this syndicate, including Captain William Steele, David Murdoch, Thomas Russell and Frederick Whitaker, who invested in large tracts of Waikato land and developed it for farming in the 1860s and 70s.

The homestead built in 1880, and surrounding estate is significant for its associations with estate managers and their families including Henry and Elizabeth Reynolds; Reynolds was a capable estate manager, who went on to become a pioneer in butter manufacturing and established the internationally recognised Anchor brand.

The house is of great significance for its integrity, retaining evidence of its original form and fabric from the date of its establishment, as well as evidence of change associated with various periods of subsequent use and occupation.

A greater degree of change has occurred within the grounds over time. The removal of farm buildings and structures and the development of the themed landscaped gardens concept, cricket oval and construction of new buildings and structures as part of the development for use as a historic property and functions venue. The gardens still retain trees associated with the establishment of the original estate.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.heritagewaikato.org/settlement/Gordonton](http://www.heritagewaikato.org/settlement/Gordonton)





Remaining farm building near current carpark entrance to homestead

## Timeline -

Approx **1300 AD** – Tainui tribes arrived in area and occupied many sites around the Hukanui area and along the Waikato River.

**1700's** - The Piako Swamp referred to all the wet lands between the Waikato River and the Waihou River at the base of the foothills of the Kaimai Ranges.

This was an enormous area of largely inaccessible swamp broken by small islands of elevated land and intruded upon from the north and south by low ranges of dense bush covered hills.

It was a food basket for Maaori, intersected by a web of tracks and waterways, full of tuna (eel, *Anguilla* sp.), birdlife, manuka, harakeke (flax, *Phorium* sp.) and other resources.

**1840** – Signing of Treaty of Waitangi

**1858** - Pootatau Te Wherowhero was crowned the first Maaori King

**1863** – War declared on Waikato tribes for supporting Taranaki Maaori War in 1860

**1864** – Ngaati Wairere moved out of the Kirikiriroa (Hamilton) area during the land wars, where they established a new pa at Hukanui

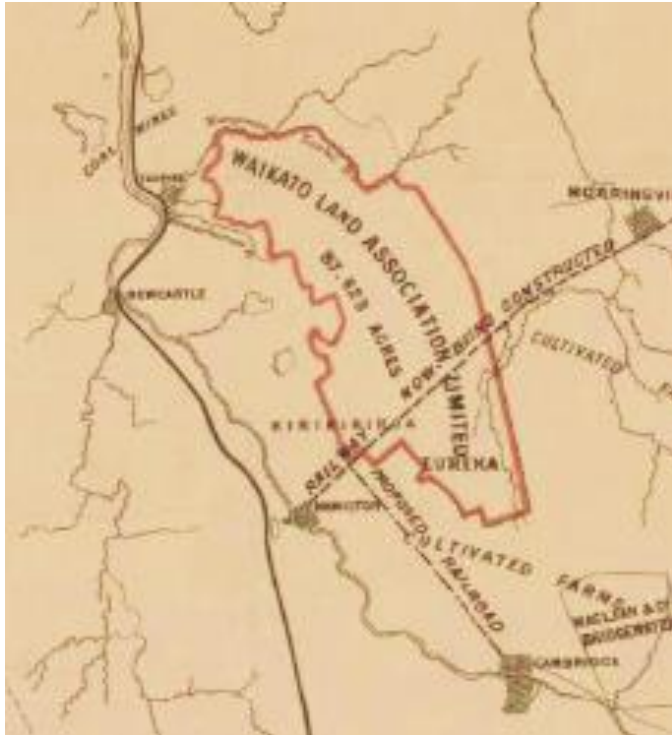
**1864** – Conclusion of Waikato Maaori Land wars. Waikato lands confiscated by Crown

**1865** – The Waikato confiscated lands were surveyed

**1870** – Piako Swamp Syndicate formed to purchase and develop vast expanse of swampland in the middle of the Waikato valley.

**1870** – Piako Swamp Company established homestead at Eureka, with Henry Reynolds as manager.

**1872** – Woodlands Estate including 86,500 acres purchased from the Crown. The Estate extended from the Rototuna area, across to Eureka, just west of Morrinsville to Taupiri in the north.



Map 3: land acquired by Woodlands Estate purchased from the Crown

**1875** – Woodlands homestead completed

**1880**– The NZ Land Association (formerly Piako Swamp Company) was shifted to the new Woodlands homestead. Farm buildings established and large paddocks of grass, maize and grain established.

**1883** – Waikato Times reported on many employees of the Waikato Land Association partaking in a sports day and social function evening.

**1885** – John Gordon took over management of the Estate.

**1892** – Auckland Star reports 30,000 sheep had been shorn at Woodlands.

**1902** – NZ Land Association had 28,000 acres of productive land, with 40,000 sheep, 3,000 cattle and 160 horses. More than half of the estate remained in an unmodified state.

The NZ Land Association property was subdivided and sold. The Woodlands homestead was offered for sale with 2,400 acres of land – initially failed to find a buyer.

**1903** – John Gordon left Woodlands, relocating to part of the Eureka estate homestead and purchased 1,700 acres.

Thomas Stone, a farmer from Ashburton acquired Woodlands homestead block, which included approximately 600 acres of grass and the remainder in manuka covered peat.

**1905** – Woodlands sold to Taranaki farmer James Riddell, who came with 10 children. The Riddell family lived and worked at Woodlands over the coming decades.



**1912** – Two eldest Riddell daughters married at Woodlands.

**1914-18** – Three Riddell sons fought in the First World War, John Riddell died of wounds on his way home. During the War, Thomas, the fourth son played a major role in running Woodlands estate.

**1928** – Don Riddell, youngest son of James and Mary, acquired 300 acres of farm including Woodlands homestead.

**1930's** – During the Depression, unemployed families were accommodated in huts on Woodlands and the men helped to dig drains in the peatland.

**1942** – Fire destroyed the shearing shed and one whole years clip of wool.

**1946** – Don Riddell suffered serious ill health, leaving him in a wheelchair



1948 aerial image of Woodlands homestead, gardens and orchard

**1962** – Don Riddell died.

**1976** – With no children of their own Irene Riddell made plans for the future of Woodlands. Property was bequeathed to the Presbyterian Support Services, upon her death.

**1983** – Irene Riddell died. Presbyterian Support Services take over management of Woodlands and surrounding farmland.

**1983** – NZ Historic Places Trust classified the homestead building as a category I historic place.

**1988** – Woodlands homestead and surrounding 15 acres offered to Waikato County Council to preserve the historic character of the house, and provide for public access as much as possible and to make it self-sufficient. After public consultation Waikato County, take over control of Woodlands with day to day management administered by a yet to be formed Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board.

**1989** – Woodlands homestead and gardens transferred to Waikato District Council



1990 aerial image of Woodlands homestead, gardens and orchard

**1990** –The Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board formed in April 1990.

**1991** – Major restoration work on the Woodlands homestead began. The gardens were redesigned by Waikato landscape architect Peter Sergel.

April - Woodlands Trust took over day to day management of the property.

November – first Reserve Management Plan completed for Woodlands Historic Reserve

**1994** – Wedding marque installed, kitchen and buffet room were built.

**1996** - Old Te Rapa bowling club relocated to property, modified and restored for use as a cricket pavilion.

**1999** – New function centre built to replace the wedding marque.

**2000** – Land purchase of additional 1.4 ha from Presbyterian Support Services at entrance to reserve for re-alignment of road entrance, additional grounds, and establishment of caretaker house.

**2000** – Remainder of Woodlands estate farmland sold by Presbyterian Support Services.

**2004** – Drive way upgrade, public car park formation and landscaping undertaken.

**2016** – Waikato District Council took over maintenance of grounds and gardens.



2017 aerial image of Woodlands homestead and gardens

### 3.2 Woodlands Uses and Values

What makes Woodlands unique is the heritage features of the house and gardens, which the public have daily access to. What is now Woodlands homestead and gardens is only a small part of what was originally the Woodlands estate. Visitors driving to this park setting may be able to visualise how the surrounding farmed countryside (now broken up into small run holdings), used to be a part of the larger estate.

With the gifting of Woodlands Estate to the Presbyterian Support Services (1976) and subsequent transfer of the homestead and an area encompassing the gardens to the Waikato District Council (1989), the land is now administered by Council as a historic reserve under Section 18 of the Reserves Act 1977.

Woodlands is identified and managed as a premier park by the Council. There is a high level of maintenance and servicing of the grounds and gardens to ensure they reflect a heritage inspired design, horticultural expertise and formal and informal elements.

Any current and future development of Woodlands needs to consider the present use (recreation), and heritage features (cultural and historic) of the reserve. These are identified in the following Goals and Objectives section.



View from the gazebo of Woodlands homestead, surrounding gardens and lake.

## **4.0 Opportunities and Issues**

Woodlands has a range of important heritage, landscaped setting and recreation features that creates opportunities for the development and management of the reserve in the future.

Identified below are some of the main challenges and opportunities that need to be addressed to realise the long-term vision for Woodlands.

### **4.1 Current Management of Woodlands**

Woodlands is identified in the Councils Parks Strategy as a premier and historic reserve within the District. The gardens and grounds are maintained to a higher level of service, reflecting the importance of the properties heritage and recreation values.

The homestead, functions complex and café, are managed by the Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board, with members being representatives from community and business leaders with business, financial, governance and fund-raising expertise. The Trust was initially set up to operate the homestead and gardens as self-funding, although Council now provides an operational grant to the Trust to ensure that the Homestead and buildings are maintained.

In 2016 Council took over the maintenance of the grounds and gardens.

### **4.2 Protecting and Showcasing Heritage Features**

The significant historic heritage and natural features of Woodlands are evident in the identification placed on the homestead and gardens, with the homestead identified as a Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Category I listing, and the land vested in Council as a historic reserve. The homestead and gardens are protected under the Waikato District Plan, where they are recognised as a Category A heritage item in Schedule 30.1 – Heritage Items.

A conservation plan was completed for the homestead in 2013 by Mathews and Mathews Architects, Auckland. This conservation plan focused primarily on the homestead and included a garden and archaeological reports. Significance is based on the identified historic, physical and cultural values of the Woodlands homestead and the gardens, with guidelines for current and future uses. The conservation plan has established policies to guide the current and future use and development of the historic place. Many of the landscape elements, in particular the establishment of some trees date back to the establishment of the homestead and make a meaningful contribution to the heritage context of the site.

Historic heritage and cultural values of the site need to be clearly identified to protect these from inappropriate use, development and maintenance regimes and risks such as vandalism.

Although only a small portion of the original estate now surrounds Woodlands, in its location set back amongst mature exotic trees, the homestead and setting is often overlooked as being open for the public use and enjoyment.



The Gordonton Woodlands Estate Trust Board have created opportunities for revenue to be earned from the site. This has allowed for re-investment into maintenance and conservation of the built structures and garden features. The development of a function events centre and a café for public use has encouraged visitors and the local community to enjoy and appreciate the heritage features of the site.

There is a need to ensure that these activities do not detract from the heritage assets and appreciation of the place or alienate community use or public access and enjoyment of the reserve. Equally any revenue generating activities should not compromise the heritage features of the setting.



Area known as the Village Green, providing space for picnics and family oriented activities and events.

### **4.3 Managing use of the site**

Groups and individuals are drawn to Woodlands to enjoy the historic building and gardens and beauty of the setting, with many people coming for a mix of education, relaxation, socialising, organised activities and events.

Because of the small size of the site, care needs to be taken to ensure that the heritage features are not compromised by the type and scale of any activities that can occur. With this space restriction, there is limited ability to cater for large or multiple events needing separate spaces without compromising further the historic heritage features of the reserve.

### **4.4 Location and access**

Woodlands is located in a rural setting being approximately 19 km north east of Hamilton City central, and 12 km south east of Taupiri. The homestead located on Whitiakahu Road just off Gordonton Road (State highway 1B) with Gordonton (3km) being the nearest settlement.

Access to Woodlands is predominantly via private vehicle, with no current public transport or footpath access provision to this reserve. The Waikato Regional Council does not currently have a bus route that runs from Hamilton to Taupiri via Gordonton.

There is a critical need to balance the location and design of parking facilities to ensure that they do not detract from the heritage values of this important historic setting.



## 5.0 Management Objectives and Policies

The vision for Woodlands Estate is:

***To maintain the homestead and garden,  
being a historic house and a garden of significance  
that brings meaning and beauty,  
recognises and conserves its unique heritage,  
invites community engagement  
and is accessible to all.***

The following objectives and policies will be used to guide management, development, protection and maintenance of Woodlands Estate.

This section should be read in conjunction and cross referenced with:

- the Waikato District Council General Policies Reserve Management Plan, and
- the Conservation Plan and its policies.



The driveway entrance to the homestead.

## **Objective I – Historical Significance**

***To conserve and maintain the historical significance of Woodlands Estate.***

### **Policies**

#### ***Heritage Features***

1. Protect the heritage values of Woodlands through:
  - 1.1 Ensuring all new structures and buildings do not detract from the heritage features and values of the reserve and are consistent with an updated conservation plan.
  - 1.2 Ensuring new structures do not detract from the heritage features of the reserve and are consistent with reference to policies of the Conservation Plan.
  - 1.3 New proposals for grounds, structures, buildings and activities will require a heritage impact assessment to be undertaken and considered by appropriately qualified persons with recommendations to decision makers.
2. Maintain the gardens to ensure their significant heritage features are retained acknowledging their continued recognition as a “Garden of National Significance” through the New Zealand Gardens Trust.
3. Ensure renewal and/or maintenance activities is consistent with the historic values of Woodlands reserve.

#### ***Conservation Plan***

4. Ensure reference is made to the Conservation Plan to address the whole of the reserve, recognising the heritage values of the location, including recommendations for;
  - 4.1 Significant views to the primary elevations of the house should be maintained, as should the landscape setting of the house.
  - 4.2 Any new structures proposed within the grounds of the property should be designed to be compatible with, and sympathetic to the architectural qualities and heritage features of the house and its surrounds, and should be located so as to minimise visual or physical intrusion.
  - 4.3 Maintaining garden as heritage setting for the homestead.

## **Historic Trees**

5. All historic and notable trees shall be protected and management to recognise their role as historic and landscape features.
6. The historic trees should be managed and maintained to ensure their survival for as long as practicable and only be removed where they are assessed or diseased beyond remediation. Removal will also require archaeological advice. Trees will only be removed where they pose a danger to public safety, harbouring disease or require removal due to damage or old age.



One of many mature Oaks in the Woodlands garden area.

## **Water Features**

7. Manage water quality through a range of strategies and measures including but not restricted to; minimising sediment deposition, silt traps, riparian lake edge planting, small scale artificial wetlands, or water stirring devices.



**Explanation:**

*Features of the homestead and site and their inter-relationship need to be protected for an understanding of the past use of the homestead for visitors appreciation of the historic and cultural values associated with the site. The garden has continued to evolve over time, so there are many layers that contribute historically to the values currently associated with it, and has changed from what was originally planted in the 1880's. The significant and identified trees and shrubs will be protected and incorporated into aspects of any interpretive (explanation) of past use of the site.*

*Operating the homestead as a museum has limitations due to difficulties with security and surveillance, however provides an appropriate setting for the display of information and interpretation relating to the Woodlands estate.*



*Management of the homestead and grounds also needs to take into account the wider impacts of the reserve, including water quality of the feature lakes of the gardens. The waterway that feeds these lakes comes from adjacent farmland, through the lakes and then onto Komakorau Stream. Council and the Woodlands Trust will continue to ensure that a high level of water quality is maintained through different measures and activities including water run-off control and other possible mechanical activities.*

## **Objective 2 – Access and Activities.**

**To provide for events and activities that raise the profile of the reserve in a way that does not compromise its heritage features.**

*[This section should be read in conjunction with the General Policies Reserve Management Plan and Conservation Plan].*

### **Policies**

#### **Public Access and Use**

8. Encourage public use consistent with the objective of preserving the historic and landscape features of the reserve
9. Encourage public access to, and enjoyment of, Woodlands historic homestead, and gardens ;
  - 9.1 Allow and facilitate controlled public access and use within a level that maintains and does not impact or detract from the heritage features and character of the property,
  - 9.2 Provide for recreation opportunities which do not conflict with the heritage features or identified features and attractions of the reserve.
10. Promote an awareness and appreciation of the cultural values and history of the reserve through interpretation and signage
11. Allow for pedestrian only access through the garden area of the reserve.
12. Control the access road so that public access and use is managed to best meet all objectives of the reserve.

#### **Events and Temporary Activities**

13. Promote events and activities especially with a heritage, botanical or community focus that;
  - 13.1 Focus on the heritage features of the homestead and its surrounds,
  - 13.2 Are at a scale appropriate to the reserve and heritage setting.
14. Take appropriate precautions to avoid effects on archaeological values while providing for temporary structures associated with events and temporary activities including but not restricted to mobile food units, stages, marquees.

15. Take appropriate precautions when allowing for sections of the reserve to be closed off for private events and/or functions, or for the development and maintenance without impinging public use and enjoyment of other parts of the reserve.
16. All events larger than 500 people will require notification to Council as an event to ensure public notification and rules are applied (Refer “General Policies Reserve Management Plan” document section on Events).



Function centre area beside Woodlands homestead

## **Prohibited Activities**

17. The following activities are not seen as consistent with Woodlands use and values and are therefore not allowed, unless part of a permitted event:

17.1 Overnight camping

17.2 Horse riding

18. The following activities are not seen as consistent with Woodlands use and values and are therefore not permitted:

18.1 Freedom camping

18.2 Scattering of ashes

### **Explanation:**

*Activities and events on the grounds of Woodlands need to be managed to ensure that users appreciate and protect the historic and cultural features of the homestead and gardens.*

*It is noted that all visitors come to Woodlands via private vehicle. There is currently no public transport available to, or footpaths giving access to Woodlands. These alternative access options are outside of the plan scope, whilst Council can review these in future planning with other activities, including roading upgrades and public transport reviews.*

*There is limited 24 hour surveillance of the reserve, therefore any activities that occur outside of normal opening hours, may require additional staffing to manage. Where temporary events are proposed, or the use of temporary structures are required, the prior written permission of Council must be obtained.*

*For example marquees bigger than 99m<sup>2</sup> require a temporary building consent from Council. Events with large numbers of people will also require additional toilet facilities.*

*Some activities are not seen as being consistent with the heritage values of the homestead and gardens, and these are identified in part. With referral to other possible activities, reference needs to be made to the General Policies Reserve Management Plan document. New development identified in the Concept plan may require further assessment with regard to any impacts on the heritage features of Woodlands.*



## **Objective 3 – Community and Commercial Involvement**

**To provide opportunities for community involvement in the reserve and for social or commercial enterprise to return value to the reserve.**

*[This section should be read in conjunction with the General Policies Reserve Management Plan and Conservation Plan].*

### **Policies**

#### **Community Activities**

19. Enable opportunities for the local community to become engaged in maintaining the gardens and bush area of Woodlands Estate through guided volunteer programmes / friend's group and/or other similar support networks.
  
20. Allow for the opportunity of sponsorship and donations to the Woodlands estate where they align with the heritage values and these benefit the reserve.

#### **Commercial Activities**

21. Enable opportunities for social and commercial enterprise including a café where the enterprise:
  - 21.1 supports and respects the heritage, ecological and community values of the park;
  - 21.2 enables the enjoyment of the public of the reserve; and
  - 21.3 aligns with the vision for the reserve.
  
22. Individual commercial operations including leases and licenses must be endorsed by the Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board and be pursuant to Section 58A of the Reserve Management Act, with all leases and sub leases to have final written approval from Council. Leases should include constraints, to ensure that activities do not detract from the heritage features.

*[Refer to General Policies – Section 7 Occupation of Reserves]*

## Use of Cricket Oval

23. The cricket oval will be the only permitted sporting facility on the reserve, where;
- 23.1 Cricket practice and organised games will be subject to a booking process through the Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board
  - 23.2 Any cricket games of a district wide level will require approval by the Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board
24. That, where possible any proposed uses of the cricket oval is organized so that the public may still gain access to the homestead and garden complex.
25. That any proposed use of the oval will not detrimentally affect the long-term public use of the reserve or the physical resources of the reserve, or the heritage features of the place.



Cricket pitch with café located on edge of the oval

### **Explanation**

*Woodlands was initially set up to be self-supporting, with the Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board seeking financial and practical assistance in order to maintain and develop the Reserve. The Trust continues to seek funding support to maintain the homestead and other heritage development, with the Council managing the gardens and grounds. Any support to the future development of Woodlands is most welcome by the Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board.*

*The acknowledgment of sponsorship and donations shall be discreet and shall not detract from the historic and cultural setting of the reserve.*

## **Objective 4 – Woodlands Trust**

**To ensure the Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board develop maintain and manage Woodlands in such a manner that the historic and aesthetic values of the house and site be preserved and that public access and enjoyment encouraged.**

*[This section should be read in conjunction with the General Policies Reserve Management Plan and Conservation Plan].*

### **Policies**

#### **Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board Role**

26. Ensure the maintenance and management of the buildings is in keeping with the Conservation Plan, the ICOMOS New Zealand Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage value (revised 2010) and heritage best practice.
27. Develop a financial strategy to generate funding, including to capture the receipt of financial aid to further Woodlands and the Trusts objectives and future development.
28. Manage any investments that provide for the future maintenance, conservation and management of Woodlands; including the investment of monies, purchase or improvement of land.
29. Ensure the ongoing conservation, repair and maintenance of the homestead.
30. Insure the homestead and buildings including contents against loss or damage by fire or any other means.
31. Develop and ensure a risk management plan is in place.
32. Discharge out of income or capital all outgoings properly payable by the property in respect of buildings.
33. Report yearly as required to the Council as to the conduct, funds received, funds spent and any other matters as required in the Trusts management of the property.

## **Agreements Between Waikato District Council and Gordonton Woodlands Trust**

34. Review and update any agreements between the Council and the Trust to ensure that these are relevant, reflect changing circumstances, roles and responsibilities.

### **Explanation**

*The Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board was set up after public consultation to support the maintenance and development of Woodlands. Their role has been to develop, maintain, promote and encourage interest in the heritage values associated with Woodlands, and the ongoing future of Woodlands.*

*The Trust also has the objective to raise money to manage the property, to maintain its heritage features and setting. Any funds raised by the Trust can be used in furthering and carrying out the objectives of the Trust, including investment of any money, or in the purchase or improvement of land or property to enhance the public use experience of the reserve.*

*The Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board is made up of representatives of community members. Refer to Appendix 3 for details of roles and responsibilities of Council and Trust.*

## **Objective 5 – Partnership and Development:**

**To work in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure the ongoing development of Woodlands, whilst maintaining its heritage features and providing a safe and enjoyable recreation reserve for visitors.**

*[This section should be read in conjunction with the General Policies Reserve Management Plan and Conservation Plan].*

### **Concept Plan**

35. A concept plan (refer Appendix 4) outlines the proposed enhancement of the reserve. This has been prepared with input from mana whenua (Ngaati Wairere – Hukanui Marae), trust board, communities of interest, HNZPT and heritage and conservation landscape professionals including consideration of:
- a. Improved public access, including layout of paths and tracks.
  - b. Improved parking layout options for cars and buses.
  - c. Develop improved access through the reserve from carparks to homestead.
  - d. Develop provision of additional public toilets away from homestead and café precincts (ideally in North-East area).
  - e. Development of a heritage themed children’s playground that enhances family use of Woodlands.
  - f. Investigate relocation of the workshop and storage areas.
  - g. Development of garden plant collections that provide public interest.
  - h. Development of garden features that reflect heritage values and have public appeal.
  - i. Undertake a feasibility study for the development of a heritage archive facility and homestead office to be built alongside the homestead.

## Partnerships

36. Council will work collaboratively with Waikato-Tainui, Ngaati Wairere, Gordonton Woodlands Trust and the community to achieve the ambitions of this plan. This may include planning, funding and development of areas within Woodlands, including garden and building development, cultural locations, and/or park development.
37. Work alongside Mana Whenua – Ngaati Wairere to understand their desires for Woodlands.
38. Engage with stakeholders to ensure any proposed development will meet the needs of the community and visitors.
39. Work with stakeholders to ensure Woodlands is a user-friendly venue for events.

### **Explanation**

*Woodlands is a key historical site of European significance, particularly of the homestead. To continue to attract people to this location, the Woodlands Trust and Council need to be able to plan ahead to continue to develop the gardens as a key heritage site of interest and importance to the wider region. This may include restoration, or development of features or displays that attract a wider range of people to visit. Any future development needs to be balanced and assessed in relation to existing significant plantings and vegetation.*

*In 1991, a concept plan outlined the future proposed development of the reserve, based on a 'Turn of the Century' theme. The aim was not to re-create a historical theme, but to reflect the ambiance of this particular age through the reconstruction of the homestead and interpretive garden themes. In reviewing the existing plan, it was identified that a new updated concept plan based on available historical planting was needed to provide a context for proposed new developments to Woodlands that would attract a wider range of visitors to this heritage setting. A cautious approach is required. Respect must be had for the authenticity of heritage features and care taken not to obscure their provenance.*

*It is noted that when events such as weddings or funerals are held at Woodlands, that there is often limited parking for both attendees and the general public. A review of the parking and layout of the carpark/s is required to better accommodate vehicles. This may include the purchase of additional adjacent land to allow for overflow parking and the future establishment of new features that are in keeping with the heritage values of Woodlands. Parking has to be balanced with maintaining heritage setting and values.*



*The existing workshop and storage area restricts public flow from the carpark and into the gardens - relocation of these buildings to an alternative location would encourage more people to explore more of the gardens from the café or homestead. The Café has become a major drawcard for many visitors, and to maintain this as a drawcard for Woodlands, further development / upgrades of the café facilities, surrounds, and underground services are required.*

*A proposed children's playground with a nature / garden theme has been identified as an option to provide for additional enjoyment. This may be located in a central area of the gardens or along a linear path encouraging children and families to explore and discover each site. The design and location of any playground and associated structures will have to be carefully considered for their impact on heritage values, including the homestead.*

*For some visitors, the many different paths may cause some confusion as to what route to follow, whilst other paths restrict the passage of wheelchairs and push chairs. The development of an all-weather circuit path would encourage wider use and enjoyment of the gardens. New paths should be kept to a minimum. The materials of any new paths should reflect existing information relating to the historical landscape, design, and avoid any archaeological remains.*

*Discussion has been undertaken around the development of a heritage archive centre to hold and maintain early records of the development of Woodlands and the wider district.*

*Partnerships with Hapuu, iwi, park users, and the wider community are essential to ensure that the needs of these groups of people are represented and understood in any future development and use of Woodlands.*



## 6.0 Implementation

40. Council will seek to implement this management plan through;
- a. working with Gordonton Woodlands Trust,
  - b. working with local community groups to develop and maintain the area,
  - c. seeking funding from external sources for capital development works.

### **Explanation**

*This management plan identifies developments that may occur but they do not commit Council to undertake any specific works. This implementation will require advice and direction from heritage professionals to ensure the protection and retention of heritage features.*

*Council will allocate funds as it considers appropriate through the Annual and Long Term Plan process, which involves public submissions, and in consultation with the Gordonton Community Board.*

*Funding from external sources for specific projects may influence the order in which works are undertaken.*



Reconfiguration of the carpark will provide for more structured parking particularly during high use periods.

## ***Appendix I – Legal Descriptions***

### **Woodlands**

LOT I DPS 62416

LOT I DPS 48035

Vested as Historic Reserve

LOT I DPS 85485

Held in Fee Simple

**Appendix 2 - Heritage New Zealand Historic Place Listings**

Woodlands Homestead - HNZPT Listing 155, Category I



Woodlands homestead built in the 1870's

## **Appendix 3 – Roles and Responsibilities of Council and Gordonton Woodlands Trust**

### **Waikato District Council**

Owner of historic property known as Woodlands Estate Historic Reserve

Work in partnership with Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board to develop objectives and future development options

Responsible for major capital expenditure items to homestead e.g. painting, roof repairs

Maintenance of Woodlands grounds: including garden staff and garden maintenance and development

Maintain landscaped areas, carparks, paths, service areas, gates and fences.

Preparation of reserve management plan to provide current and future direction and development of Woodlands

*Note: The Council provides annual funding to the Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board to support the public use and enjoyment of Woodlands.*

### **Gordonton Woodlands Trust Board**

Lessee of historic property known as Woodlands Estate Historic Reserve

Sustain a Trust board to develop, maintain and manage Woodlands Estate

Where possible to undertake activities to ensure Woodlands is self supporting

Raise funds to further Woodlands objectives and development

Manage any investments that provide for future developments

Maintain homestead building with a minimum of \$2m insurance public risk policy.

Insure all fixtures, fittings, plant, equipment and chattels in the building against loss, damage or destruction.

Day to day maintenance of homestead and subsidiary buildings, including minor repairs, glass replacement, plumbing and electrical in good condition, maintain storm and wastewater systems (including downpipes and gutters).

Removal of all rubbish generated through activities in the buildings

Replacement of carpets / floor coverings, internal fittings

Pay all outgoings for telephone, gas, power charges, water sanitation including sewerage, rates in respect of building premises

Report yearly to Council on the activities, conduct and any other matters as required in the Trusts management of the property

#### **Appendix 4 - Concept plan for future development of Woodlands Estate**

Through the review of this reserve management plan, the Council and the Woodlands Trust sought public feedback and input into a concept plan that was developed for Woodlands Estate.

This concept built on the previous plan for Woodlands, where Peter Searle a nationally recognised landscape architect, designed a setting befitting to a European homestead and heritage of the site based on a “turn of the century” theme.

The concept plan outlines the desired development / upgrades proposed for Woodlands. It should be noted that any development is subject to funding being available for the particular project.

<b>Short term projects:</b>	undertaken 1-3 years (as from 2020/21 financial year)
<b>Medium term projects:</b>	undertaken in 4-7 years
<b>Long term projects:</b>	undertaken in 8-12 years

The concept plan identifies works in two parts; hard development where structures and surfaces are proposed or to be renewed, and soft development including garden and lawn refurbishments and improvements.

Please refer to the concept plan for full details.