

**Proposed Plan Change,  
54 Oakleigh Street,  
Maungaraki  
Assessment of Open Space and  
Visual Amenity**

**PREPARED FOR:  
Hutt City Council**

**PREPARED BY:  
PAOS Ltd**

SEPTEMBER 2010

**PAOS<sup>®</sup>**

*2/188 The Parade, Island Bay, Wellington, New Zealand  
Tel: 04 383 8382, Fax 04 383 5705, Mobile 027 247 7257  
E-mail [office@paos.co.nz](mailto:office@paos.co.nz)*



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# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

PAOS has been engaged by Hutt City Council (the Council) to assess the potential effects on open space and visual amenity values of the proposed zoning of land at 54 Oakleigh Street, Maungaraki, to General Residential Activity Area. We assessed the potential effects on:

- Open space and reserve provision
- Existing and potential opportunities for informal and formal recreation
- Natural features and vegetation
- Existing urban form
- The visual landscape.

The assessment is based on available information and concerns the former Otonga School sports ground and accessway from Oakleigh Street, located at 54 Oakleigh Street (here after referred to as 'the site' - Refer to Figure 1 for an aerial view). The legal description of the site is Lot 2 DP 33083, which is held on CT WN27A/676. The site is 1.4652 ha and currently zoned General Recreation Activity Area under the District Plan of the City of Lower Hutt. The site is designated as a neighbourhood reserve under the Council's Neighbourhood Reserves Management Plan, though it is not classified as a reserve under the Reserves Act.

## 1.2. CONCLUSIONS

A zoning change to Area A (the northern part of the site, see Figure 1) to General Residential Activity Area is appropriate, with certain conditions:

- 1) That the southern 6500m<sup>2</sup> of Area B (see Figure 1) is developed as a neighbourhood park
- 2) That measures are carried out to protect vegetation on the western bank of Area A between the flat grassed area and Belmont Regional Park carpark.

The background to these conclusions and recommendations is discussed below:

- It is vital that the integrity of the entrance to Belmont Regional Park is retained, as this important park is regionally significant. The entrance at Oakleigh Street already has one accessway to the Otonga Heights subdivision with extensive retaining. While planting

will obscure this accessway in time, the Indicative Development Plan proposes a second accessway through to the Belmont Regional Park entrance. Protecting vegetation in this area will help to maintain the visual separation between the Regional Park carpark and the residential properties

- PAOS considered retention of the entire site as General Recreation Activity Area for formal recreation and as a neighbourhood park, concluding that the site is generally not suitable for the development of formal recreation. The majority of Area B is covered with a 6+ metre depth of fill<sup>1</sup> which would require extensive drainage at some cost to bring it to sportsfield standard. Area B could however be developed for junior sport in the future if demand in the area was sufficient
- As stated in Key Direction 3 of the *Reserves Strategic Directions* resources are best located "...where there is greatest overall benefit for the city and its environment."<sup>2</sup> The current provision of sportsfield facilities on the valley floor with easy access and proximity to sporting clubs achieves this
- If, in the future, demand for sportsfields in this area of the Western Hills were to increase then PAOS suggests that such facilities would be better located on the existing field next to Maungaraki School. This field is closer to the centre of the community and near other facilities which could be used in conjunction with the field. Thus additional facilities such as toilets would not be required
- However, the site is an existing flat area which is uncommon in the three neighbouring suburbs of the Western Hills, and has value because of this, both for recreation and subdivision. The proposed plan change would allow the approximately 6500 m<sup>2</sup> of Area B to be developed for recreation which could be used by the local community for activities such as kick-a-ball type activities, kite flying, and other forms of informal recreation. PAOS concludes from our investigations that generally there would seem to be adequate open space provision in the area for informal recreation. The retention of Area B as General Recreation Activity Area would allow for future recreational development, particularly if the ground surface is improved. This would meet future demand for usable flat recreational open spaces in an area with a high proportion of young people and families
- The site does not meet any Reserves Key Directions. The site is not visually prominent, being viewed from only a small number of viewpoints within close proximity to the site. The greatest visual impact of a zoning change in Area A to General Residential would be

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<sup>1</sup> Tonkin and Taylor. *Preliminary Geotechnical Stability Assessment, Oakleigh Street, Maungaraki*, February 2009, p3.

<sup>2</sup> Hutt City Council. *Reserves Strategic Directions*, October 2003, p10

from the recent development at Otonga Heights. These houses would view onto houses rather than green open space. Possible mitigation measures for these properties are outlined below. Views of the proposed plan change from Cherry Blossom Grove may also require mitigation depending on the final level of heights of properties developed. In balance, the overall visual impact of zoning the northern part of the site as General Residential is considered to be low

- With the exception of the Belmont Regional Park entrance, PAOS considers that overall the impact of the loss of vegetation on natural site features resulting from the proposed plan change are likely to be minor. Most of the vegetation that will be affected has low amenity value and the benefits of the plan change outweigh this loss.

### 1.3. RECOMMENDATIONS AND MITIGATION

Recommendations and suggested mitigation measures are that:

- Proceeds from the sale of land as a result of the plan change should be used for drainage improvements to the recreation area, to make the area more usable. This area should be classified reserve and managed in accordance with the Hutt City Council Neighbourhood Reserves Management Plan
- Retain the integrity of the vegetated western bank of Area A between the flat grassed area and Belmont Regional Park carpark. This vegetation would help to maintain the visual separation between the Regional Park carpark and the residential properties
- Investigate reducing the impact of views of the residential properties from the recent Otonga Heights Development. As Otonga Heights is a more recent development these views have not been long established, but the impact of properties as shown in the Indicative Development Plan could be reduced if the houses were sited at the base of the existing bank, or at least at a lower level than existing properties. This would also help to mitigate potential views of the properties from Cherry Blossom Grove. Further planting on the vegetated bank to the south of the site near the existing fenceline would assist in mitigating views of any development from Cherry Blossom Grove.

## 2. Background

PAOS is familiar with the site and the wider landscape. From 2006 to 2008 we carried out a review of all lands held by the Council in Fee Simple and managed as reserve. The review used criteria as set out in the Council's open space policy document the *Reserves*

*Acquisition and Disposal Policy and Guidelines.* As part of the review we assessed open space values of the site and its contribution to the reserve network.

The assessment found that the site had a low level of significance over the criteria of Landscape Visual, Open Space and Natural Site Features. The overall value of the site was considered to be low. Principal reasons were that the site does not meet any Reserves Key Directions and is viewed from surrounding residential properties only.

However, the assessment noted that the site is located in the Western Hills Landscape Identity Area, an area with few flat areas suitable for active recreation<sup>3</sup>. The site had the potential to be developed for recreational use if there was sufficient demand. The assessment noted that there was a need to establish the degree of informal recreational use of the land. For a copy of the initial PAOS assessment, see Appendix 2.

## 2.1. PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE

The Council proposes to zone Area A (the northern area) General Residential Activity Area, and to retain Area B (the southern area) as General Recreation Activity Area, as shown in the Proposed Zone Change plan in Appendix 1 and on Figure 1. An alternative would be to retain the entire site as General Recreation Activity Area and develop it further for formal and/or informal recreational use.

A Council resolution of 12<sup>th</sup> August 2008 resolved:

*"That Council retains part of the site, including the vegetation covered face between the rear of the Oakleigh Street properties and the southern fence line, to classify as recreation reserve, while investigating freeing up some land for housing purposes... In this way Council could use some of the proceeds of the sale to undertake improvements, in particular drainage, to increase the reserve's usability and ensure compatibility with the Belmont Regional Park entrance."*<sup>4</sup>

At present the site is zoned General Recreation Activity Area in the District Plan, except for the accessway from Oakleigh Street which is zoned General Residential Activity Area.

### General Residential Activity Area

A key objective of the General Residential Activity Area under the District Plan is to "maintain and enhance the amenity values and residential character of the General

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<sup>3</sup> Active recreation means recreation activities which require people to be active physically e.g. organised sports, as opposed to passive recreation e.g. picnicking, feeding ducks.

<sup>4</sup> Resolution from Council Meeting of 12 August 2008 in relation to *Item 3a - Western Ward Land review Report on Submissions - Oakleigh Street (Former Otonga School Sports Field)*



Residential Activity Area of the City". A General Residential zoning allows for "residential dwelling houses and activities, open space, existing subdivision patterns and a general absence of large scale commercial and industrial activities [which] all contribute to the residential character and amenity values associated with the General Residential Activity Area"<sup>5</sup>. This type of development is typical of the surrounding residential area of Maungaraki, the streets, surrounding the site (Oakleigh Street, Maungaraki Road, Cherry Blossom Grove and Wattle Grove, which are all zoned General Residential Activity Area. The Indicative Development Plan would fit with the description of residential zoning although proposes slightly smaller lot sizes than those in the more established properties immediately adjacent to the site in Oakleigh Street and Wattle Grove.

The District Plan goes on to state that "non-residential, commercial or industrial activities and inappropriate subdivision have the potential to alter the character of the residential environment, and affect adversely amenity values associated with a particular area. The adverse effects of these activities will be managed through the use of lists of activities and rules." Furthermore the plan states that commercial and industrial activities will be discouraged and the clearance of vegetation controlled to protect visual amenity values and the intrinsic values of ecosystems<sup>6</sup>. The Indicative Development Plan is for residential activities only, along with the development of part of the site as a neighbourhood park. This would not significantly alter the character of the residential environment or affect adversely amenity values, vegetation or ecosystems.

### **General Recreation Activity Area**

Key objectives of land zoned General Recreation in the City of Lower Hutt District Plan are:

- To ensure that recreation activities have adverse effects which are no more than minor on adjoining residential activity areas.
- To ensure that recreation activities carried out are compatible with the physical characteristics of the land.

The District plan goes on to state that "formal and active recreation activities should be encouraged in those areas where visual and amenity values will not be affected...and topography is suitable. It is considered that those areas of high visual amenity values, such as bush-clad areas, should be protected from inappropriate use and development"<sup>7</sup>. A policy

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<sup>5</sup> Hutt City Council. *District Plan - City of Lower Hutt* p 4A 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Hutt City Council. *District Plan - City of Lower Hutt* p 4A 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> Hutt City Council. *District Plan - City of Lower Hutt* p 7A 1-2.

of the District plan is therefore “To encourage land of suitable topography to be developed and used for formal and active forms of recreation”<sup>8</sup>.

### 3. Site Description

The site is an open grassed area accessible by an accessway (that forms part of the site) between nos 52 and 56 Oakleigh Street, Maungaraki. A vegetated buffer and ballstop fence separates residential properties on Oakleigh Street and the site. Plants include ngaio, taupata, flax, cabbage trees and agapanthus. The open grassed area itself sits around 10m higher than the residential properties along Oakleigh Street and forms a terrace between this area and the former site of Otonga School to the north. See Figure 1 below for a view of the site.



Figure 1 - aerial view of the site

On the northern side of the grassed area is a steep grassed bank, with small specimen trees (juniper, *Macrocarpa*) as well as *Coprosma* and flax, which slopes up to the accessway, now known as Otonga Heights. This school accessway now leads to a 19 lot subdivision on the

<sup>8</sup> ibid p7A 2.

grounds of the former Otonga School. The accessway connects to a new through road which exits onto Maungaraki Road through the neighbouring Belmont Regional Park carpark.

During a site visit on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2010, PAOS found the open grassed area to be very wet underfoot. Parts of the area were under water and the whole ground was very puggy and swamp-like. Tyre damage from vehicles has torn up the ground, particularly in the north east and north west corners (see Figure 2 below).



Figure 2 Views of ground condition of site (Fuji FinePixS9500, 50mm equiv, 1 frame each)

A fence with a mixture of mostly native vegetation (tree ferns, cabbage trees, pittosporum, taupata and flax) surrounds the area on three sides. The eastern side of the accessway has a steep bank with a mixture of vegetation, including, tree ferns, ngaio, flax and gorse. Residential properties on Wattle Grove back onto the top of this bank. The houses generally face towards Wattle Grove and therefore do not look over the site. Some of the houses at the northern end of Wattle Grove look down onto the site.

Another vegetated bank slopes down to the entrance to Belmont Regional Park to the west. Vegetation on this bank includes tree ferns, cabbage trees, pittosporum, taupata and flax.

The sites are located within the Maungaraki area which according to the 2006 census has a population of 3552 people. Maungaraki can generally be described as a family orientated area; couples with children make up 45.3% of all families living in Maungaraki, compared with 42.4% in the Wellington Region and 42% in the whole of New Zealand. Maungaraki also has a slightly higher percentage of young people, with 21.6% of the population aged under 15, compared with 20.6% in the Wellington Region<sup>9</sup>. The figure for Maungaraki is similar to

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<sup>9</sup> Statistics New Zealand.

<http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats/AboutAPlace/SnapShot.aspx?id=3569302&type=au&ParentID=1000009&expand=2000046&scrollLeft=0&scrollTop=456&ss=y> accessed 18 August 2010.

the national proportion of 21.5%<sup>10</sup>. This is significant when assessing reserve provision in the Maungaraki area, particularly open space for formal and informal recreation.

In the wider context, the site is located on the northern edge of the 'Western Hills Landscape Identity Area' as identified in the Hutt City Council's *Reserves Strategic Directions*. Key features of the Western Hills are steep bush clad gullies with streams, prominent hilltops and escarpments and Belmont and Boulder Hills.<sup>11</sup> None of these features are present on the site.

## 4. Relevant Planning Documents

### 4.1. NEIGHBOURHOOD RESERVES MANAGEMENT PLAN

The site is designated as a neighbourhood reserve under the Council's Neighbourhood Reserves Management Plan, although it is not classified as a reserve under the Reserves Act. Because of this the Council cannot be bound by the Reserves Act for any matter in relation to the site, even though it is included in the management plan.<sup>12</sup> However Council policy states that this site will be managed in line with the provisions of the Act. Management of the site is guided by the objectives and policies contained in the management plan.

Neighbourhood reserves are an open space set apart for public recreation and enjoyment and managed by the Council and cater for local residents. Their intention is to allow for local residents to be able to recreate locally without the need for transport, and to provide opportunities for children and young people to recreate in their local area.

### 4.2. INDICATIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

An Indicative Development Plan (See Appendix 1) proposing an 11 lot subdivision was developed by Tonkin and Taylor in February 2009. The plan shows development with lot sizes allowed under subdivision provisions in the District Plan in the General Residential Activity Area, with a minimum Controlled Activity lot size of 400m<sup>2</sup>. Site coverage of a maximum of 35% is allowed. The Indicative Development Plan is consistent with the new neighbouring subdivision, although the size of the lots is slightly smaller than those in the more established surrounding area.

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<sup>10</sup> Statistics New Zealand. <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats/quickstats-about-a-subject/nzs-population-and-dwellings/sex-and-age.aspx>, accessed 19 August 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Hutt City Council. *Reserves Strategic Directions*, October 2003, p17

<sup>12</sup> Hutt City Council. *Memorandum: Western Hills Land Review Project - Preliminary High Level Legal Review of Otonga School Sports Ground*, 1 February 2008, p2.

## 5. Assessment of Potential Effects of Proposed Plan Change

The following assessment considers the effects of the proposed zone change on open space and reserve provision, informal and formal recreation, natural features and vegetation, existing urban form and visual amenity.

### 5.1. METHODOLOGY

We visited the site and assessed the effects of the proposed plan change in the context of the immediate neighbourhood and the wider context of the 'Western Hills Landscape Identity Area' as identified in the Council's *Reserves Strategic Directions*.

The prime assessment tool was the criteria set out in the Council's *Reserve Land Acquisition/Disposal Policy and Guidelines*. In using the criteria to assess the sites, good judgment and common sense were applied. As the lands have long term values that may improve in importance as an area develops, the impact of a plan change to General Residential Activity Area zoning on the northern area of the site was considered carefully.

### 5.2. EFFECTS ON OPEN SPACE AND RESERVE PROVISION

The sites are part of the 'Western Hills Landscape Identity Area' as identified in the Council's *Reserves Strategic Directions*. The Strategic Directions identifies key features of the Western Hills as steep bush clad gullies, prominent hilltops and escarpments, Belmont and Boulder Hills and Korokoro and Speedy Streams.<sup>13</sup>

The site does not meet any Reserves Key Directions and does not form part of any of the key features of the Western Hills. The site is not multifunctional. Other similar open spaces in the area include the playing field at Maungaraki School, Holly Grove Reserve and Martin Grove Reserve next to Normandale School. Banksia Grove Reserve also provides space for the type of informal kick-a-ball type activities which could be carried out on the site.

Despite these other areas, the value of the site is that it provides a flat open space, and this type of reserve area is undersupplied in the Western Hills due to the topography of the area. Flat areas in the Western Hills are therefore "considered important to the reserves network"<sup>14</sup> and further investigation as to how the site could be developed for informal and

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<sup>13</sup> Hutt City Council. *Reserves Strategic Directions*, October 2003, p17

<sup>14</sup> Hutt City Council. *Memorandum: Western Hills Land Review Project - Preliminary High Level Legal Review of Otonga School Sports Ground*, 1 February 2008, p5.

formal recreation is discussed in Section 5.3. Further discussion of how the site fails to meet the two Key Directions which relate to it are outlined below.

Key Direction 2 of the *Reserves Strategic Directions* is to “Ensure effective delivery of parks and recreation services to the community by continuing to work with other agencies, other divisions of the Council and the private sector.”<sup>15</sup> An action of this Key Direction which relates to the site is to “work with schools and other open space providers to improve environmental enhancement and avoid duplication of facilities.”<sup>16</sup> Until the Otonga School closed the site would have complied with Key Direction 2. This Key Direction is significant in relation to the site now as it sits within an area with two schools which have similar open spaces and playing fields. Nearby Maungaraki School on Dowse Drive has a similar playing field area with a playground and Normandale School on Martin Grove has its own small playing field and is immediately adjacent to a Council owned area of flat, grassed open space which provides space for formal and informal recreation (Martin Grove Reserve).

It is considered that the site no longer meets this Key Direction as similar areas of open space with the potential to be developed in conjunction with other open space providers already exist in the surrounding area. In addition, from the information provided to PAOS, there are no current opportunities to develop the site in conjunction with other providers or agencies, including sports clubs, which are based on the Hutt Valley floor<sup>17</sup>, or with community groups.

Key Direction 3 of the *Reserves Strategic Directions* is to “Provide high quality parks facilities and services focussing on areas where there is greatest overall benefit for the city and its environment.”<sup>18</sup> An action of this Key Direction is to “Consolidate the provision of sportsfields to intensify capacity where appropriate and consider resting those areas as open space where there is high maintenance cost with minimal use.” A further action is “Improving environmental quality and variety of recreational opportunity on existing sportsgrounds, especially in the Hutt Valley floor.”<sup>19</sup>

The site currently has poor drainage and is in poor condition due to this factor. The site is not currently used by any organised sporting groups. Its use informally by people living in the area is outlined in 2008 submissions on the site. Activities include playing ball games

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<sup>15</sup>Hutt City Council. *Reserves Strategic Directions*, October 2003, p9

<sup>16</sup> *ibid* p.10

<sup>17</sup> Discussion with HCC sportsgrounds officer, 23.08.10

<sup>18</sup> Hutt City Council. *Reserves Strategic Directions*, October 2003, p10

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*

such as soccer and cricket, chasing games, kite flying, practicing golf swings and casting for fishing, throwing frisbees and vortex balls, running and exercising dogs.<sup>20</sup>

Despite this, given the state of the ground and the need for drainage to make it more usable, and the fact that it is without formal use on a regular basis, this area could be considered as one that has “high maintenance cost with minimal use”. As discussed above, the *Reserves Strategic Directions* outlines that priority for the improvement of sportsfields is on the valley floor, “where there is ‘greatest overall benefit for the city and its environment.” The site therefore does not currently meet this Key Direction in the context of providing “high quality parks facilities and services”.

### 5.3. EFFECTS ON INFORMAL AND FORMAL RECREATION

A number of different areas provide a range of informal recreation opportunities in and around Maungaraki. Some of the areas described below are similar to the site, while others provide different types of recreational experience (see Figure 3 on the following page for an aerial view of these sites):

- Belmont Regional Park; the Oakleigh Street entrance is located immediately to the west of the site. Belmont Regional Park provides open space for active recreation including walking, running, mountain biking and horse riding. The park entrance at Oakleigh Street has information signs, carparking and toilets, along with some open grassed areas suitable for picnicking or other informal recreational activities
- Informal recreation in the form of a short walkway is accessible off Otomaru Grove to Camels’ Hump, with views out over the city
- Banksia Grove Reserve is an open grassed area with a playground located on Banksia Grove. This area provides for informal recreation with a kick-a-ball space and play equipment
- Frank Cameron Park is accessible from Acacia Avenue via a steep track which provides informal recreation with walkway connections to George Gee Drive; with open space suitable for informal and passive recreation; and down to Percy Scenic Reserve

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<sup>20</sup> Summary of use of the site collated from submissions made during formal consultation, carried out over the period 6 May 2008 to 18 June 2008

Figure 3: View of other areas providing recreational opportunities





- Holly Grove Playground is a small playground opposite the Maungaraki shops on the corner of Holly Grove and Dowse Drive. It provides play equipment for young children and meets the immediate needs of the local community and is located very close to the neighbourhood shopping centre
- Rowan Street Reserve is an open grassed area opposite the Maungaraki shopping centre on Dowse Drive. It also provides space for informal and passive recreation with seating, a basketball half court and hoop
- A Council owned playing field area with a playground behind Maungaraki School provides for informal recreation and is used by the school, serving as both a playground and open space area
- Martin Grove Reserve is a playing field area located below Martin Grove next to Normandale School. The area provides an open grassed area suitable for formal and informal recreation, as well as pedestrian access to Normandale School from Pokohiwi Road and a connection from Pokohiwi Road to Normandale School
- Further away from the site but still in the Maungaraki area, Percy Scenic Reserve off Dowse Drive has space for informal and passive recreation for all ages and abilities such as walking and picnicking.

The site currently offers opportunity for informal recreation by providing a kick-a-ball type space. It has not been developed for formal outdoor sports, but there is potential to develop the site further for informal or active recreation by improving the site's drainage as discussed below. A Legal Review of the site by the Council notes that although the site is considered to have low reserve value, "flat areas in the Western Hills are undersupplied and considered important to the reserves network"<sup>21</sup>. The report however states that it is unlikely any formal playground equipment would be constructed on the site given the close proximity to existing playgrounds and the lack of visibility from the road. As discussed above, demand for playground areas and informal open spaces would appear to be well supplied in Maungaraki, with four playgrounds in the Maungaraki area - Banksia Grove, Holly Grove, Maungaraki School and Rowan Street Reserve. The Banksia Grove playground is within walking distance of the site.

#### **Potential Improvement of the Site**

The retention of Area B as General Recreation Activity Area would allow for the improvement of the current surface through the plan change and potential sale of Area A,

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<sup>21</sup> Hutt City Council. *Memorandum: Western Hills Land Review Project - Preliminary High Level Legal Review of Otonga School Sports Ground*, 1 February 2008, p5.

some of the proceeds of which will be used for the improvement of the site's drainage<sup>22</sup>. The Urban Development and Planning Assessments Report by Tonkin and Taylor outlined two possible options for improving drainage on the site:

- 1) The lower cost option involves recontouring the surface to form a central crown with surface swales adjacent to the north and south boundaries. Subsoil drains beneath the swales would discharge into the existing stormwater system. The report states that "the resulting surface would be usable throughout most of the year but would remain wet underfoot for a few days after rain. It would not withstand heavy use from sporting activities during winter."<sup>23</sup>
- 2) The higher cost option involves more extensive earthworks to obtain better cross falls, the provision of turf drains and a higher (sportsfield) standard of topsoil grading, decomposition and fertilizing. The report states that "the surface would not be an "all-weather" surface but usability would improve over time as the topsoil regained its structure and the reserve would become usable all year round under most weather conditions."<sup>24</sup>

PAOS considered the possibility of retaining the whole of the site as General Recreation Activity Area, reasons why the site was not considered suitable are outlined below:

- **Current sportsfield demand** is centered on the valley floor, where sporting clubs are situated. No sporting clubs have their home ground in the Western Hills.<sup>25</sup> The current situation with all sportsgrounds on the valley floor meets the aim of the *Reserves Key Directions* to "Provide high quality parks facilities and services focusing on areas where there is greatest overall benefit for the city and its environment"<sup>26</sup>
- **Site location** at the northern edge of Maungaraki means any formal recreation developed would require travel from the valley floor. If demand for sportsfields in this area of the Western Hills were to increase, such facilities would be better located on the existing field next to Maungaraki School. This field is closer to the centre of the community and near other facilities which could be used in conjunction with the field

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<sup>22</sup> Officer recommendation of report - *Strategy and Policy Committee 20 June 2008 - Western Ward Land Review - Report on Submissions*, report dated 10 July 2008. p168.

<sup>23</sup> Tonkin and Taylor Ltd. *Urban Development and Planning Assessments: Oakleigh Street, Maungaraki*, March 2009. p.6.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid* p.7.

<sup>25</sup> Discussion with HCC sportsgrounds officer, 23.08.10

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*.

- **Preliminary Geotechnical report** undertaken by Tonkin and Taylor reveals that the southern area of the site is covered with a 6+ metre depth of fill<sup>27</sup>, which would require extensive drainage at some cost to bring it to sportsfield standard.

Due to these factors it is considered that the site is generally unsuitable for development in its entirety for formal recreation.

However, because flat areas are uncommon in the Western Hills, the site has value, both for recreation and subdivision. The proposed plan change retains approximately 6500 m<sup>2</sup> of Area B as General Recreation Activity Area. This area could be used by the local community for activities such a kick-a-ball type activities, kite flying, and other forms of informal recreation. Alternatively, should demand be sufficient, the area could be developed for junior sport, e.g. with 50x30m and/or 40x60m football fields.

For these reasons, the impact on the provision of open space and formal and informal recreation by zoning the northern area of the site as General Residential is likely to be low.

It is considered that there is already adequate open space provision in the area for informal recreation in Maungaraki neighbouring suburbs in this part of the Western Hills, and there are more suitable possibilities available to develop formal recreation should this need arise in the future. The proposal to retain Area B as General Recreation Activity Area would allow for future recreational development, particularly if the ground surface is improved. This would undertake an action of the Key Directions "To encourage land of suitable topography to be developed and used for formal and active forms of recreation."<sup>28</sup> Retaining Area B as General Recreation Activity Area would also provide for future demand for usable flat recreational open spaces in an area with a high proportion of young people and families.

#### 5.4. EFFECTS ON NATURAL FEATURES AND VEGETATION

It should be noted that an ecological assessment of the site has not been carried out, however none of the areas of vegetation described below are part of any Significant Natural Resource Areas in the District Plan, nor are any of the trees on site identified as significant. The vegetated areas on the southern and eastern side of the site do not connect with any wider areas of vegetation.

Vegetation on the site is restricted to a mixture of native and exotic vegetation which edges the flat grassed terrace of the site. This vegetation includes:

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<sup>27</sup> Tonkin and Taylor. *Preliminary Geotechnical Stability Assessment, Oakleigh Street, Maungaraki*, February 2009, p3.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid* p7A 2.

- Specimen trees including *Coprosma crassifolia*, *Macrocarpa* and juniper as well as flax, north of the site on the bank between the flat area and Otonga Heights. Vegetation in this area would most likely be removed if the proposed plan change were to proceed. Loss of this vegetation is not considered to be significant as specimens are small with little amenity value (See Figure 4).
- Ngaio, taupata, flax, cabbage trees and agapanthus on the bank between the flat terrace and residential properties on Oakleigh Street. The proposed plan change would not effect vegetation in this area
- Tree ferns, ngaio, flax and gorse on the steep bank next to the eastern side of the right of way. The proposed plan change would not affect vegetation in this area. Similar vegetation grows alongside a ball stop fence on the eastern side of the flat area. This vegetation may have to be removed if improvements to turf drainage are to be made, but the loss would be weighed up against the benefits of improved ground conditions
- Tree ferns, cabbage trees, pittosporum, taupata and flax are present on the vegetated bank on the western side of the site which separates the open grassed area from the Oakleigh Street entrance to Belmont Regional Park. The western boundary of the plan change includes part of this area would result in the removal of part of this vegetation. (see Figure 9 in Section 5.6.3 for a view of the approximate area). It is important that this area is either retained, or the effect of vegetation removal mitigated in order to reduce the impact of the plan change on Belmont Regional Park, as discussed below.

## 5.5. EFFECTS ON BELMONT REGIONAL PARK

The vegetated bank area on the western side of the site was formerly part of a band of vegetation which linked to land that is part of Belmont Regional Park. This area has now been separated from the park area by the new link road connecting to Otonga Heights. It still has a role in retaining visual amenity, as it would separate the proposed development from the entrance to Belmont Regional Park.

It is important to retain the integrity of this major<sup>29</sup> entrance to Belmont Regional Park. The entrance at Oakleigh Street already has one accessway to the Otonga Heights subdivision with extensive retaining. While planting will obscure this accessway in time, the Indicative Development Plan proposes a second accessway through to the Belmont Regional Park entrance.

Protecting vegetation on this bank is desirable as this will reduce the visual impact of the plan change from the carpark and maintain the visual separation between it and any future residential development on Area A.

With the exception of the impact on Belmont Regional Park, overall it is considered that the impact of the loss of vegetation on natural site features resulting from the proposed plan change are likely to be minor.

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<sup>29</sup> As identified by Greater Wellington Regional Council in the Draft Parks Network Plan <http://www.gw.govt.nz/assets/Parks-and-Recreation/Management-plan-review/Part9Maps5-6BelmontLR.pdf>



View of  
vegetation on  
northern bank



View of  
vegetation on  
southern bank



View of vegetation on  
eastern bank (left) and along  
ball stop fence (right)

Figure 4 Views of site vegetation. (Fuji FinePixS9500, 50mm equiv, 1 frame each)

## 5.6. EFFECTS ON EXISTING URBAN FORM

Zoning Area A General Residential Activity Area allows for “residential dwelling houses and activities, open space, existing subdivision patterns”<sup>30</sup>. The type of development allowable under a General Residential zoning is appropriate in the context of the existing residential character and urban form of Maungaraki. On the northern side of Maungaraki, where Area A is situated, residential properties on Maungaraki Road and Oakleigh Street form a fringe along the boundary of Belmont Regional Park. These properties are all zoned General Residential Activity Area. The proposed zoning of Area A to General Residential would be consistent with this pattern, creating a further area of residential development next to the edge of the park, while still retaining the neighbouring grassed open space of Area B.

The Indicative Development Plan proposes lot sizes allowed under subdivision provisions in the District Plan in the General Residential Activity Area, with a minimum Controlled Activity lot size of 400m<sup>2</sup>. Site coverage of a maximum of 35% is allowed. The Indicative Development Plan is consistent with the lot sizes of the neighbouring Otonga Heights subdivision, but from the information PAOS have, the sizes of the lots are smaller than those in the immediate surrounding area. However, due to the site’s low visual prominence as discussed below, this is not likely to detract from the existing urban form of the area.

## 5.7. EFFECTS ON VISUAL AMENITY

### 5.7.1. Broad scale views

There are few broad scale views onto the area, as the terrace of the site is situated at a higher level than much of Maungaraki. The site is not viewed from points further away in the Western Hills, so the overall impact at this scale is likely to be low.

### 5.7.2. Middle scale views

The site is viewed from some properties on Honeysuckle Grove (See Figure 5), but this view is mainly of Area B when viewed from the road (which would remain zoned General Recreation). There may be views of Area A; in this case Area A would be viewed in the context of the neighbouring development of Otonga Heights (which has a similar density to the proposal) and residential development in Maungaraki to the south as viewed in Figure 5.

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<sup>30</sup> Hutt City Council. *District Plan - City of Lower Hutt* p4A 1-2.

### 5.7.3. Immediate views

Properties in the immediate area of Oakleigh Street are situated at a lower level than the site, and therefore do not have a view of it. Some properties immediately to the east of the site on Wattle Grove may have views of Area A from the rear of the properties, but houses on this lower part of Wattle Grove generally view out towards the street.

Houses on the upper terrace of Wattle Grove will have views down onto Area A. Some of these views may be obscured by vegetation on the bank between these houses and the site. These properties will generally view any development in the context of neighbouring Otonga Heights and the surrounding residential character of Maungaraki.

Depending on the final height and level of properties, views from Cherry Blossom Grove may be of a line of properties at the base of the Wattle Grove escarpment (See Figure 6). Area A when viewed from this point should partly be sheltered from view by the existing vegetated bank to the south of the site. Further planting on this bank close to the fenceline would assist in mitigating views of the development from this point.



Figure 5 View of the site from the footpath next to 4 Honeysuckle Grove. Area A cannot be seen from the road but may be viewed from the residential properties, who would view the development in the context of the neighbouring Otonga Heights and the surrounding residential development of Maungaraki, as seen above.  
(Fuji FinePixS9500, 50mm equiv, 1 frame)





Figure 6 - View of site from Cherry Blossom Grove. The main area of the site visible is Area B. Some views of the rooflines of residential properties on Area A may be visible from here, but this would be viewed in the context of existing residential development on the ridgeline. Undertaking further planting on the vegetated bank close to the existing southern fenceline on Area B would assist in mitigating views from this point.  
(Fuji FinePixS9500, 50mm equiv, 1 frame)



Figure 7 - View of properties on Maungaraki Road - at left properties on the eastern side of Maungaraki Road which are situated below road level and view onto each other, at right no 319 Maungaraki Road, which looks directly onto Belmont Regional Park.  
(Fuji FinePixS9500, 50mm equiv, 1 frame each)

On Maungaraki Road, properties either view directly towards Belmont Regional Park, or are situated below the level of the road and views are obscured by neighbouring housing (See Figure 7 and also Figure 8 was taken from the road outside 319 Maungaraki Road). The site can be seen from the road in places, along with part of the Otonga Heights development.



Figure 8 - View of site from the road outside 319 Maungaraki Road. From this point the plan change on Area A would be viewed in the context of the neighbouring development on Otonga Heights and development on the ridgeline.  
 (Fuji FinePixS9500, 50mm equiv, 1 frame)

The site sits at a higher level than the Belmont Regional Park carpark at Oakleigh Street, thus views of the site from the carpark are limited. Some houses in the new development at Otonga Heights are visible, particularly those houses at numbers 13, 20, 22 and 24 Otonga Heights, as shown in Figure 9. Development close to the western boundary of Area A would also be visible from this point. As discussed earlier in Section 5.4, retaining or providing mitigation to the vegetated bank on the western side of Area A is important, in order to reduce the visual impact of residential development from this point and to maintain the visual separation between the Regional Park carpark and residential properties.



Figure 9 - View of existing recently developed residential properties at Otonga Heights from the Belmont Regional Park carpark on Oakleigh Street. Residential development on Lot 1 of the Indicative Development Plan will be visible next to 13 Otonga Heights.

The greatest impact will be on residential properties situated on Otonga Heights whose views out towards the harbour may be obscured by new neighbouring properties on the site of the proposed plan change to General Residential. As Otonga Heights is a more recent development these views have not been long established, but their impact could be reduced if the new houses were sited at the base of the existing bank, or at least at a lower level than these existing properties.

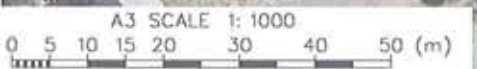
When looking at all the viewpoints covered above collectively, PAOS considers that the overall visual impact of zoning the northern part of the site as General Residential is low, as the site is viewed from only a small number of areas, and these views will be in the context of existing residential development in Maungaraki and the immediate area. Possible mitigation measures can be undertaken for areas where the visual impact is higher in the surrounding context.



# Appendix 1 - Area of Proposed Zone Change and Indicative Development Plan



P:\84009\84009.004\WorkingMaterial\CAD\84009.004-09.dwg, 09 (2), 23/08/2010 3:23:12 p.m., glw, 1:1



DRAWING STATUS: PRELIMINARY DRAFT

DESIGNED :	AIK	Aug 10
DRAWN :	MVS	Aug 10
DESIGN CHECKED :		
DRAFTING CHECKED :		
CADFILE :	\\84009.004-09.dwg	
APPROVED :		
<b>NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION</b>		
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COPYRIGHT ON THIS DRAWING IS RESERVED		

NOTES :

Appendix 1  
Proposed Zone Change

REFERENCE :



**Tonkin & Taylor**  
Environmental & Engineering Consultants

Wellington Level 4, 265 Wakefield St.  
Tel. (04) 381 8560 Fax. (04) 381 2908  
Email : well@tonkin.co.nz

Auckland
  Christchurch
  Hamilton
  Whangarei
  Nelson

CLIENT, PROJECT		
HUTT CITY COUNCIL		
PROPOSED ZONE CHANGE, OAKLEIGH STREET		
TITLE		
Site Plan		
SCALES (AT A3 SIZE)	DWG. No.	REV.
1: 1000	84009.004-09 1	0



LEGEND	
	Sewer (existing)
	Sewer (proposed)
	Stormwater (existing)
	Stormwater (proposed)
	Water (existing)
	Water (proposed)
	Site Boundary
	Proposed Property Boundaries
	Existing Property Boundaries
	Sewer Manhole
	Stormwater Manhole
	Sump
	Valve
	Fire Hydrant

A3 SCALE 1: 1000  
 0 5 10 15 20 30 40 50 (m)

DRAWING STATUS: PRELIMINARY DRAFT

DESIGNED :	AIK	Feb.09
DRAWN :	MVS	Feb.09
DESIGN CHECKED :		
DRAFTING CHECKED :		
CAOFILE :	\\84009.004-04.dwg	
APPROVED :		
<b>NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION</b>		
<small>This drawing is not to be used for construction purposes unless signed as approved</small>		
<small>COPYRIGHT ON THIS DRAWING IS RESERVED</small>		

NOTES :

1. All dimensions are in metres unless noted otherwise.

**Appendix 1  
 Indicative Development Plan**

REFERENCE :



**Tonkin & Taylor**  
 Environmental & Engineering Consultants

Wellington Level 4, 265 Wakefield St  
 Tel. (04) 381 8560 Fax. (04) 381 2908  
 Email : well@tonkin.co.nz

Auckland  Christchurch  Hamilton  Whangarei  Nelson

CLIENT, PROJECT	HUTT CITY COUNCIL OAKLEIGH STREET SUBDIVISION
TITLE	INDICATIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN Site Plan
SCALES (AT A3 SIZE)	1: 1000
Dwg. No.	84009.004-04
REV.	0



## Appendix 2 - Initial PAOS Report

<b>HCC Parcel Number:</b> 3012983	<b>Legal Description:</b> Lot 2 DP 33083
<b>Status:</b> Fee Simple	<b>District Plan:</b> General Recreation
<b>Overall Level of Significance:</b> Low – but potential to be developed as a sportsground	



<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>RATING</b>
<b>Landscape - Visual</b>	Low
<b>Landscape - Open Space</b>	Low
<b>Landscape - Natural Site Features</b>	Low
<b>Ecological</b>	N/A
<b>Recreation - Informal/ Outdoor Sport</b>	Could easily be used for formal recreation if sufficient demand

**Comments:**

- Playing field of former Otanga School – now closed
- Viewed from surrounding houses only – access from unmarked long driveway.
- Does not currently meet any of the Key Directions but is an asset that could easily be developed and used as a sportsground if needed in an area with few flat areas suitable for sports and other recreational activities. Need to establish degree of informal recreational use, especially by neighbours.