Shellene Esk teen

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I am here on behalf of the Manor Park and Haywards community, a community that has already put considerable time, effort and resources into explaining why we strongly oppose the proposed rezoning of the Benmore Crescent land from Rural to General Industrial.

I want to start by reminding everyone what makes Manor Park such a special place, and why so many people choose to live here, stay here and, in many cases, raise generations of their families here.

When properties come up for sale in Manor Park, or when you ask residents what they love about living here, certain words and phrases come up time and time again:

- Peace and serenity.
- A wonderful sense of community.
- A feeling of being tucked away from the hustle and bustle, yet so close to everything.
- Lower Hutt's best-kept secret.
- Surrounded by greenery, nature, the Hutt River, beautiful walking and cycling tracks, Belmont Regional Park and the Manor Park Golf Sanctuary, which has been part of our community for over 100 years.
- Dry creek stream with abundance of native eels, fish and other endangered species.
- An abundance of native birdlife, including tūī, kererū, bellbirds, fantails, falcons, and our local ducks.

These aren't just marketing words used to sell houses. They genuinely describe the character of this unique neighbourhood, and the lifestyle that people have chosen when making Manor Park their home.

And that is precisely what is at risk of being lost if this land is rezoned General Industrial.

Our community has worked incredibly hard to protect and restore this beautiful natural environment. Through our local successful Predator Free programme, which received national funding, we have already caught more than 1,500 pests, including possums, hedgehogs, stoats, weasels, rats and mice, and the results are becoming increasingly obvious, with a noticeable increase in native birdlife throughout our neighbourhood over recent years.

This is something our residents are incredibly proud of. It represents commitment, hard work and collaboration by a community that genuinely cares about protecting and enhancing the natural environment we are fortunate enough to live in.

We are also working collaboratively with Forest & Bird and other Predator Free groups throughout the Wellington region, with the shared vision of creating a native bird corridor.

Introducing General Industrial zoning right alongside this environment puts everything we are working so hard to protect at risk. It seems completely contradictory to be encouraging communities to restore native habitats and create wildlife corridors, while at the same time allowing industrial development that could undermine those very efforts.

Manor Park is not just a collection of houses. It is a long-established, close-knit residential community where people know their neighbours, look out for one another and genuinely care about where they live.

We have young families, elderly residents, a private hospital, aged-care facilities and supported living homes. People walk, cycle, play golf and enjoy the outdoors. Children and grandchildren grow up here enjoying a relatively peaceful and safe environment.

This is the environment and community that we are asking you to protect.

The proposed industrial zoning would fundamentally change the character of our neighbourhood and our quality of life.

The land at Benmore Crescent is, in places, less than 30 metres from established residential properties in Mary Huse Grove. This is not an industrial area separated from homes by a buffer of land. It is right on our doorstep.

We have already experienced what happens when industrial-scale earthworks take place so close to our homes. Residents have endured ongoing noise, vibration, dust, heavy machinery and increased traffic.

People have told us they can no longer comfortably sit in their backyards and enjoy a cup of tea without the noise and dust. The natural sounds of birdsong have been replaced by machinery and construction noise.

We have also experienced concerns about privacy, particularly where land levels have been raised and this site now overlooks neighbouring backyards.

These are not abstract planning concerns. These are real impacts on people's everyday lives.

An industrial zone brings the potential for ongoing noise, dust, odours, artificial lighting, vehicle movements and other disturbances. If a waste transfer station proceeds, those effects could be even more significant, given its proposed operating hours and the additional vehicle movements associated with it.

Consider what that means for people who have chosen to live here for peace, safety and a connection with nature.

Our homes are where we should be able to relax, open our windows, enjoy our gardens and feel comfortable in our own surroundings. We should not have to live with the expectation that industrial activity will become part of our everyday lives.

There is also a significant impact on mental health and wellbeing. The uncertainty, stress and disruption already experienced by residents should not be dismissed. This affects families, elderly residents and people who may be particularly vulnerable to noise and disruption.

We should not have to sacrifice the quality of life of an established residential community to accommodate an industrial development that does not belong here, and could possibly be located elsewhere.

2. The environmental consequences

The environmental implications are equally concerning.

The Benmore Crescent site was historically a green area with established vegetation, trees, wildlife and a stream running through it. That stream feeds into the Hutt River and the wider water environment, including the Taita Gorge aquifer.

This is particularly important because the stream is recognised by Greater Wellington Regional Council as a water body of significance.

The discovery of native fish in neighbouring waterways, native eels, geckos and nesting falcons demonstrates the ecological value of this wider area.

We are concerned that industrial development will bring increased risks of pollution, contamination, seagulls, habitat loss and an increase in pests and rodents.

The proposed industrial development has already, and will result in large areas of land being covered with hard, impermeable surfaces, significantly reducing the ground's natural ability to absorb rainfall.

We have already seen the consequences of this during the extreme rainfall event in April this year. The area became severely flooded, with water levels so high that parts of the site resembled a river. Drainage culverts became blocked, and the flooding was so significant that the motorway had to be closed.

The water simply had nowhere to go.

This should be a serious warning about the area's ability to cope with excessive rainfall. Adding further impermeable surfaces and increasing stormwater runoff raises very real concerns about where that water will be diverted and what impact it could have on neighbouring properties, waterways and the wider environment.

We cannot afford to ignore what we have already witnessed.

Runoff from industrial yards and vehicle areas can carry oil, grease, chemicals and other contaminants. There is a very real concern about what could enter the stream, the Hutt River and the wider water environment.

We also need to consider the site's geological and natural hazards, including the fault line running through the land. These risks make it even more important that the suitability of this location is properly considered.

3. Traffic and road safety – a major concern

Perhaps one of our most serious concerns is traffic safety.

Manor Park has one main access in and out, via the SH2/SH58 flyover. Anyone who regularly uses this intersection knows that it already presents significant challenges.

There are blind corners, visibility issues, vehicles travelling at speed, confusing lane movements and regular congestion, particularly during peak hours.

We already experience queues backing up towards the flyover when the railway crossing barriers are down.

Now consider introducing additional vehicle movements, including heavy fully-laden trucks, into this already constrained road network.

There are already serious concerns about whether the existing road layout can safely accommodate these vehicles.

- Large trucks cannot safely make certain turns out of Benmore Crescent without crossing into the path of oncoming traffic.
- Trucks exiting Manor Park face visibility and lane-positioning challenges.
- There is no suitable provision for trucks that miss the turn into Benmore Crescent to safely turn around.
- The steep ramp into Manor Park creates additional challenges for fully loaded trucks.
- Queues at the railway crossing can extend back towards the flyover, potentially obstructing the interchange.

The distance between the railway crossing and the interchange is approximately 140 metres. It does not take much imagination to see how additional heavy vehicles and queuing traffic could create a serious safety issue.

We must also consider what happens if there is an accident and the only main access into Manor Park becomes blocked.

We have a hospital, aged-care facilities, supported living homes and a significant elderly population. Emergency services need to be able to access our community without unnecessary delays.

This is not just an inconvenience or a matter of increased travel time. It is a genuine safety concern that could have serious consequences.

We should not be approving an industrial zoning that places additional pressure on an already problematic and potentially dangerous access route.

4. Fire risk and water infrastructure

The Council has identified that the emergency water storage serving Manor Park and Haywards needs to be significantly increased to meet existing community requirements.

Introducing industrial activities, potentially involving large quantities of waste and combustible materials, adds another layer of risk. As we all are aware, water alone does not extinquish lithium battery fires, which is a huge concern.

A significant fire at this location could threaten neighbouring homes, the railway infrastructure and the wider community.

We need to be confident that the necessary infrastructure and emergency provisions are in place before considering whether this is an appropriate location for industrial development.

5. Is this the right location?

6. Our request to the commissioners

At the previous proposed District Plan stage, the Hutt City Councillors unanimously agreed that this land should remain zoned Rural.

That decision recognised the importance of the surrounding community and the concerns raised about introducing General Industrial zoning in this location.

We are extremely concerned that this decision is now being reconsidered and that our community must once again stand up and explain why this zoning is inappropriate.

We ask you to look beyond the development potential of this land and consider the people, homes, environment and infrastructure that surround it.

Please consider the cumulative effects – not just one individual activity or one particular consent, but the combined impact of industrial development on an established residential community.

We ask you to retain the Rural zoning or, alternatively, to consider a more appropriate zoning, that would allow for development compatible with the existing residential neighbourhood and surrounding environment.

We understand that the landowner wants to develop the property and make productive use of the land. We are not suggesting that the land should never be developed.

The question should not simply be whether industrial development can be made to fit on this particular site. The question should be whether this is the right place for it.

We believe the answer is no. General Industrial zoning is simply not appropriate for this location.

There are opportunities for recreational, professional services, hospitality, offices and small-scale commercial activities that could benefit the wider community, complement Manor Park and allow the landowner to develop the property without compromising the character, safety and environment of our neighbourhood.

What we are asking for is a sensible and balanced outcome – one that recognises the landowner's interests but does not come at the expense of an established residential community.

We are not asking for anything unreasonable. We are asking that the existing character of our neighbourhood, the safety of our residents and the protection of our natural environment are given the consideration they deserve.

We should not have to lose the very things that make Manor Park special simply to accommodate an industrial development that belongs somewhere else.

Please make a decision that protects our community, our environment and the quality of life of the people who live here, now and for generations to come.

Thank you.