

The review by HCC of reserves and free hold land used as reserve has, understandably touched a nerve for many residents. Your committee has discussed the implications, so far as we know them, and the following is a summary of our current position.

First, we recognise and applaud the Councils willingness to engage with Residents Associations as part of the review and to use their local knowledge to supplement and in some cases reverse the initial findings of the draft review.

Secondly, what we have seen so far is an initial draft and this clearly includes some proposals that would be fiercely opposed. We understand for example that the Friends of Belmont Regional Park have pointed out that one area noted as “investigate for sale as lifestyle blocks” includes Belmont Trig!

The NRA’s position is quite simply stated. Although we are prepared to look at any particular instance on its merits, we would oppose in principle the sale of any land currently gazetted as Reserve. We would also oppose the sale of any land held as freehold if it is currently in active use for recreation, or if it provides substantial amenity value to the suburb. Regarding the latter, I have to say that in my view, visual amenity in particular has been woefully under valued in the draft assessments I have seen.

The position regarding the land around the Playcentre and the adjacent freehold / road reserve land is rather more complex. The Playcentre feels that having adjacent housing would improve their security, and a ‘swap’ between the land currently gazetted as reserve and the adjacent land has been mooted. However previous officers of the NPA have pointed out that when the current Normandale school was built the then Normandale Reserve land (where the school now is) was swapped for the Playcentre reserve against the wishes of residents and the NPA, and in the process the area of reserve was reduced to about half, but with “guarantees [from LHCC] of development and improvement, and permanent retention as a reserve”. Clearly in light of this information we will need to investigate further.

We would welcome any views on this matter and especially any information from residents with knowledge of the process and conditions under which the ‘Playcentre’ reserve was established.

Pete Matcham
President NRA