

Normandale Residents Association

*c/o 301 Normandale Road
Lower Hutt*

SUBMISSION

TO HUTT CITY COUNCIL

on

**Korokoro and Western Ward phase 2 Land review
report No 1234 file (PL13)**

Summary of submission

The Normandale Residents Association (NRA) wish to note their appreciation of the extent and quality of the consultation and background material supplied by the Council and for the opportunity to make a submission on these proposals.

Although the majority of the land in this phase of the review is outside Normandale, we wish to comment on the basis that we believe the impact overall on the Western Hills must be considered in this review, as well as considerations pertinent to specific sites.

In summary, the NRA submit as follows:

- *That we endorse and support the recommendation that the parcels listed in Appendix 1 of the report are gazetted as Reserve with the Reserve categories assigned.*
- *That we oppose the proposed part disposal of sites 2A (47A Titiro Moana Road) and 3I (22a Akatea Road) and consider that they should be retained in their entirety and gazetted as Reserve.*
- *That we oppose the sale in full of site 5G (102b Miromiro Road) and consider that this should be retained in its entirety and gazetted as Reserve.*
- *That for the remaining sites, although we do not oppose their disposal, we are very mindful of the importance of retaining an environment that is visually dominated by vegetation both when seen from within the suburbs of the Western Hills, and when viewed from the valley.*

Key aspects of the Western Hills

The Western Hill suburbs, particularly Normandale and KoroKoro, where development has been gradual over an extended period of years, retain an environment that is visually dominated by vegetation. Much of this vegetated area also provides the basis for a network of walking tracks, some officially maintained by HCC, many developed and maintained by local residents. Whilst some of this land is owned by HCC, much of the vegetation is retained on private land. In addition much of the vegetation on both HCC and private land contains mature trees, a circumstance that does not prevail in many if any other wards of the City.

A key aspect of our submission is the importance of retaining this visual and recreational environment within the peri-urban landscape, and the contribution that this landscape makes to the social, economic, physical and mental health of both residents and the City as a whole.

Detailed comments.

The principle thrust of our submission is the need to maintain and extend a landscape within the Western Hill suburbs that is dominated by treescapes, and provides an interlinked walking / cycling network of paths through these areas. We are also mindful of the Councils “Urban forest” strategy and the need to link through current valley floor Parks and Reserves to the Eastern Hills.

All the areas within this review on which we would comment contribute to the visual perception of the Western Hills, and so to the contribution that the area makes to the overall health and sustainability of the City.

Specifically, research on the contribution of vegetation and non commercial forestry within a peri urban environment to the overall welfare and sustainability of cities identifies a series of benefits which we have used in the following summary.

Landscape enhancement

Tree cultivation within urban areas to enhance their visual character extends throughout recorded history. Apart from the visual diversity provided, trees add coherence to an urban landscape, give a sense of civic pride, and directly contribute to the economic life of the City by attracting investment, particularly by high tech industries whose work force tend to be most environmentally aware.

Recreation

In addition to formal parks, peri-urban forested areas provide important recreational facilities. In particular, many of the areas under consideration in this review already contain formal and informal networks of tracks linking both suburban areas and other forested areas. We specifically note the existing tracks through the area designated 22a Akatea Road, and the potential of the area designated 102b Miromiro Road to have a track developed to link with existing reserves and pathways.

A sense of well-being

An increasing body of work identifies a sense of well-being from living, or partaking of recreation within, a tree-filled landscape that can be quantified for both psychological and physiological well being. “.. *views containing trees and other vegetation elicit preference or liking and can have positive influences on a range of other important feelings having a central role in psychological wellbeing....many scenes dominated by trees foster [psychological] restoration because they elicit positive feelings;..*”¹ and “...[In a matched pairs trial] *surgical patients assigned to rooms with windows looking out on a natural scene had shorter postoperative hospital stays, received fewer negative evaluation comments in nurses' notes, and took*

¹ **Ulrich, R S**, (1990) ‘The Role of Trees in Human Well-Being and Health’ in *Proceedings of the Fourth Urban Forestry Conference*, St. Louis, Missouri, USA, October 1989, Rodbell, P (Editor), p 25–30.

fewer potent analgesics than ... patients in similar rooms with windows facing a brick wall.”²

It is this sense of well being that we consider the most important aspect of the Western Hills, and the one that we are most anxious to preserve by preventing piecemeal degradation.

Habitat for wildlife

Within the Wellington area, wildlife and bird life in particular is dominated by species that are margin dwellers. That is their preferred habitat is at the margins of treed areas that provide both cover and access to a wide variety of food sources. The maintenance of a wide diversity of flora, both endemic and introduced within the landscape ensures a broader supply of food sources, and the maintenance of reserve areas ensured continuance of the preferred habitat. The retention of the areas on which we are making our submission will ensure that margin habitat is maintained and that the integrity of the Korokoro, Galbraith’s Gully stream and Percy’s stream catchments are protected.

Generation of Micro climate

It is clear both from empirical experience and academic research that trees within a peri-urban landscape have a significant and quantifiable effect on the immediate local climate. Whilst the planting trees for wind shelter is the most common example within the Western Hills, their contribution to human comfort by shading dwellings, reducing glare and noise is well known and documented. However the direct impact of vegetation on the comfort and sustainability of dwellings has been under reported in New Zealand. For example:

“..vegetation can significantly affect building heating budgets. Windbreaks have been found to reduce home heating costs by 4 to 22 percent, depending on site windiness and how airtight the structure is..”³

In a literature review, “THE POTENTIAL OF URBAN FORESTRY IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: A CONCEPT PAPER, Carter J, FAO Forestry division, 1995; the use of vegetation to ameliorate the energy use of buildings is further noted. ” *it is clear that trees can have a significant and quantifiable effect ...Deering (1954) found that in non-air-conditioned homes in California, interior temperatures were as much as 20°F (about 9°C) cooler in summer months. Studies have shown that in fact the costs of air-conditioning a building can be reduced by up to 50 – 60%, depending on the location of the building and the trees around it (Miller, 1988). In a temperate, Northern climate it would be usual, for example, to plant deciduous shade trees on the east and west side of buildings, so that their shade provides summer cooling and their autumn leaf shed allows some solar radiation in winter (Sand, 1993).*”

Similarly for noise pollution, Carter notes that “...Cook (1978) found that trees and other vegetation in conjunction with landforms reduced highway noise by 6 – 15 dB, while trees in combination with solid barriers reduced noise by 5 – 8 dB. “

² **Ulrich, R S**, (1984) ‘View Through a Window May Influence Recovery from Surgery’ *Science* 224 (4647):420–421.

³ **Miller, R W**, (1988), *Urban Forestry Planning and Managing Urban Greenspaces*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, USA.

We consider that the retention of the noted areas as Reserve is essential to maintain existing microclimates affecting both flora, fauna, and human habitation. We also consider that this contribution to the objectives in the HCC Sustainability Strategy should be noted and considered in any decision regarding disposal that could lead to a modification of the vegetative cover.

Site specific comments.

2 London Road

We have no specific objection to the sale and development of this site. However we consider that, in addition to the caveats noted in the assessment provided to the HCC Land Review Working Group, this site is a prime example of one where the visual impact of any development on the overall impression of the Western Hills could be out of proportion to the size of the development. We consider that any sale should include covenants requiring any development to be screened from the valley by appropriate tree planting, and that no earth works should be permitted that would in any way compromise the existing vegetation on the escarpment below this site.

22a Akatea Road

We note that this site both contains existing walking tracks developed by the local community, and forms an integral part of the Percy's stream catchment. We consider that the loss to the community of any part of this area in terms of the benefits listed, when quantified would far outweigh any revenue from the sale.

We strongly support the Korokoro Environment Group in submitting that this plot should be retained in its entirety.

47a Titiro Moana Road

This site currently falls entirely within Belmont Regional Park and is managed as such by Greater Wellington Regional Council under an agreement with HCC. We consider that as such it was clearly the intent of the Lower Hutt Council that this land should be retained and treated as Recreational reserve. Apart from the acknowledged difficulties in developing on the proposed site, we consider that the risk to the Korokoro Stream both during construction and from continuing use as dwellings is too great to be contemplated. We also note that incremental compromise is the most insidious and prevalent cause of degradation to, and loss of, public spaces worldwide. We therefore strongly oppose the sale of any part of this plot for development, and submit that it be retained in its entirety and gazetted as Recreation Reserve.

102b Miromiro Road

We believe that the prime consideration for this site should be its existing contribution to the visual perception of the area, to the provision of a coherent habitat from the valley floor to Belmont Regional Park,; and its potential to contribute to an expansion of the footpath network. The site links, both physically and visually, the reserve area below Normandale school and hence through to Jubilee Park, Martin Grove, Pokohiwi Road and Pekanga Road. Directly across Miromiro Road from this site is a further reserve providing a link through to Wisteria Grove.

In addition to the recreational possibilities this site, as noted in the assessment provided to the Working Group, comprises an integral part of "defined character of the Western Hills Landscape Identity Area", and provides visual coherence with adjacent gullies and reserve areas.

We consider that this site provides all the benefits we have noted above, and especially contributes to Landscape enhancement, Recreation, Wild life habitat and a Sense of place and Well being for Normandale residents.

We strongly oppose the disposal of this site and submit that it should be retained in its entirety and Gazetted as Recreation reserve.

For and on behalf of the Normandale Residents Association

P. Matcham
President