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Town Belt Legislative and Policy Review 9 December 2012

This submission from Mt Cook Mobilised relates to the Council's Town Belt Legislative and Policy Review.

We were impressed by the quality of the draft Management Plan, its level of detail, the way the Plan is organised, and the way in which the Town Belt management has been divided into sectors.

We affirm the 9 guiding principles. We absolutely affirm the place of the Town Belt for Wellington, as a place of beauty where nature is dominant, to be used primarily for outdoor recreation, and not to be used for private or commercial gain. Some use for public utility cannot be avoided.

We do not wish to see further alienation of Town Belt land.

We do not wish to see commercial activity on the Town Belt, but we acknowledge that there are sporting groups based on the Town Belt which undertake activities for the purpose of generating funds to keep their recreation group viable.

We agree that, in principle, there should be no more buildings allowed on the Town Belt, and that buildings which are no longer in use should be evaluated for possible removal. The exception to this guideline is structures on the Town Belt which have cultural, architectural, historic or archeological significance. We believe these structures should not be removed. Such structures provide points of interest for people using the Town Belt and are a physical reminder of the past. Likewise, utility buildings that are in use cannot be removed.

We agree that mixed use of existing buildings is desirable and should be encouraged for recreation clubs. In addition, we think that there are buildings in the city that recreation groups could share, e.g. often school buildings are not in use in the evenings when groups meet.

We support keeping existing popular public accessways as part of the Town Belt, even when they are set apart from the main area of Town Belt, e.g. the Boyd Wilson Strip, which is off the Terrace and well-used by pedestrians. The network of walkways is an integral feature of the Town Belt which is greatly appreciated by Wellingtonians.

Mt Cook Mobilised supports the concept of community gardens and community orchards on the fringes of the Town Belt (we do not support individual plots). These gardening activities bring people together to enjoy the Town Belt, and the gardens are a source of great pride to group members who work on them. Whilst gardening was probably considered to be a household management activity in 1873, today it is a recreation activity, and an effective way of contributing to community health and development.

We wish to see the Town Belt used by people of all ages, and to have a variety of recreational uses.

We support the Council's legislative guidelines, designed to simplify management of the Town Belt, and to protect the Town Belt from development into the future.

Areas In or Near Mt Cook Referred to in the Draft TBMP:

There are three Town Belt management sectors which are of interest to Mt Cook residents, namely, Sector 4 – Brooklyn Hills, Sector 5 – Macalister Park, and Sector 7 – Newtown / Crawford Road.

Sector 4 – Brooklyn Hills

- **8.4.2 Corner of Nairn Street and Brooklyn Road**, two small sections of land by the electricity sub-station. Council proposes to remove these from the Town Belt and re-classify them as road reserve on the basis that they are isolated from the Town Belt. We do not agree. These two small pieces of land are adjacent to Nairn Park and across the road from Central Park. They highlight an area that has been lost from the original Town Belt. If the electricity sub-station was ever available for reclassification as Town Belt, these two small pieces of land would sit alongside as Town Belt. We do not agree that there is benefit in reclassifying this land as road reserve.
- **8.4.2 Epuni Street lands – 67 and 67a Epuni Street**. This land is to be added to the Town Belt. It provides a pedestrian link between Aro Valley, via Ohiro and Central Parks through to the Mt Cook and Brooklyn communities. We support amalgamating existing pedestrian accessways into the Town Belt which includes many pedestrian links across the city.
- **8.4.3 Prince of Wales Park – New Reservoir** - A new water reservoir is to be built above upper Prince of Wales Park, starting in 2015/2016. The reservoir will be buried in the hill to limit visual effects. We support burying the reservoir.
- **8.4.4 Wellington Scottish Athletic Club** – mixed use by harriers club and karate dojo. We support the retention of this building, which has mixed use and is located at the beginning of one of the walking tracks to Brooklyn. Several walking tracks can be found near this building. The building itself does not impinge on the bush-like feel of this area.
- **8.4.6.3 Access encroachment through Prince of Wales Park to houses on Wright Street** – this encroachment refers to a gravel vehicle access from Salisbury Terrace to Papawai Reserve (beneath lower Prince of Wales Park). This vehicle access is used for park maintenance, and is rarely used by private vehicles

There are **two sportsfield changing rooms in Mt Cook** that are not referenced in the draft TBMP. We support the retention of:

- Nairn Park changing rooms
- Lower Prince of Wales Park changing rooms

Changing rooms are a useful adjunct to sportsfields, particularly after muddy winter games. Their public conveniences are appreciated by players.

Central Park – We appreciate the work that the Council and Friends of Central Park have been doing at Central Park. Thinning of the trees to let in more light, and the addition of the children's playing area has brought more people to the Park.

The **Papawai Reserve Group and the Bell Road Reserve Restoration Group** thank the Council for their support with ecological restoration in this area.

Sector 5 – Macalister Park

- 8.5.1 The **former Wellington Showgrounds** (from Hutchison Road to Hall Street) is on former Town Belt land. This site includes The NZ Dance School and Toi Whakaari the NZ Drama School, the Wellington Indoor Sports complex comprising several recreation groups, two of which are run commercially. The Te Whaea artificial turf land has been added back to Town Belt and is managed by the City Council. Aside from the artificial turf, the other activities in the former Wellington Showgrounds site are managed independently and are governed by the Wellington City Exhibition Act 1959. The Exhibition was closed down many years ago, and none of the current activities are in any way remnants of the Exhibition, therefore, the 1959 Act should be revoked and this land returned to Town Belt. The recommendation in Table 5 on page 120 of the draft TBMP states that “in the event of the showgrounds use terminating, the management of the Wellington Showgrounds site should be integrated with that of the adjacent Town Belt”. Given that there are multiple operators using this site, the chance of them all closing down at the same time is slim, a more proactive approach is required to reinstating this area into the Town Belt.
- 8.5.2 Hutchison Road, Mt Cook Play Area we agree that this area should remain Town Belt
- 8.5.2 Wallace Street land – we agree that the other two small green areas along John Street/Hutchison Road should be retained as Town Belt. These areas are (1) between Wallace and Tasman Streets, on the northern side of John Street, and (2) outside Hanson Court apartments on the southern side of Hutchison Road.

Sector 7 – Newtown / Crawford Road

- 8.7.2 Government House. We agree that if this land ever becomes available, the Council should negotiate its return to Town Belt.
- Table 7, page 148 of the draft TBMP – Hospital Road / Hugh Street Play Area (this is the land's designation, there is no play area here at present). This land has been isolated from the Town Belt, but it borders the vice-regal property. If the land that the Governor-General's residence is on became available, this small area beside the road would become the natural edge of this part of the Town Belt. We recommend retaining this area in the Town Belt.

We would like to thank the Wellington City Council for the opportunity to comment.