

Background Information

The proposal is to exchange the majority of a piece of open space land (the lower land – Sec 1 SO32138) at the end of Khouri Avenue with the majority of a larger piece of privately owned, outer residential zoned land running up to the skyline ridge (the upper land – Lot 2 DP53184). The upper land will become part of Council’s open space land (the Outer Green Belt), and the lower land would be developed into residential allotments.

The proposal is attempting to find a balance between a number of issues such as:

- € privacy for existing residents
- € open space values (green belt, landscape)
- € traffic management (safety, efficiency)
- € recreation opportunities
- € good urban form for the city.

History

An open space assessment was carried out on Council’s behalf and a number of recommendations were made to Council. In 1998 the Cityscape Committee resolved:

1. *THAT it be policy to pursue agreement with the owners of land at Houghton Bay, Island Bay, Crofton Downs, Korimako Stream, Makara Road and Kaiwharawhara to secure their protection through acquisition, covenants, **land exchanges** or other protective agreements; (Text in bold added by Committee).*

The Karori - Makara Road site was identified as having major importance as an open space landscape for the Karori area. In 1999 an approach was made by Council to the owners of the property suggesting a land exchange – based on a concept plan. The focus was on retaining the higher slopes and areas of important vegetation.

In October 2002 this discussion was re-initiated by Spencer Holmes Ltd acting for Upper Hutt Developments Ltd. This company now holds the rights to purchase and develop the upper land which is owned by Vinrick Contractors Ltd. These discussions started from the point of view of a straight exchange of land titles however officers thought that better city outcomes could be achieved through a proposal that used parts of both pieces of land. The development proposal was therefore designed to protect as much of the natural values of the site as possible. Following this, discussions were held with the local community about the proposal. As a result of public meetings, amendments were made to the proposal to provide buffer areas for the existing residents and to protect as much as possible of the stream environment.

Public Benefits

€ **Landscape**

The Outer Green Belt vision encompasses landscape, ecology, recreation and heritage values associated with the main ridgeline to the west of the city. Of these, the protection of the ridgetop and hilltop landscapes is probably paramount as the other values are essentially dependant on the maintenance of the open landscape character of this ridge system. The Outer Residential land above Khouri Avenue encompasses a significant section of unprotected ridgeline which would ideally be part of the Outer Green Belt. If developed, as the present zoning allows, a significant part of this property would become

part of the built environment, visually intrusive and not very well connected to nearby urban areas.

The existing reserve at the end of Khouri Avenue is less important for landscape protection as it is considerably less prominent and the subdivision would occur at a lower contour height and would include less significant landscape features.

The overall effect would be a substantial improvement of this section of the Outer Green Belt, both in terms of landscape protection and recreation access. It also develops an appropriate extension of the urban environment edge at Khouri Avenue.

€ **Ecological**

The area is generally regenerating vegetation typical of the area and of south facing slopes. These slopes are generally wetter due to the shading that occurs. This provides a localised environment that is more conducive to regeneration by native species. A useful indicator of regeneration in these conditions are the tree-fern species. A number of these are present on both the upper and lower land. There are a number of weed species that are present including gorse and barberry. There are no identified remnants of the original forest on the reserve.

The Lower land and the gullies of the Upper land are more advanced in terms of regeneration of native species due to the topography and microclimate. The ridges of the Upper land, being exposed to more sunshine and wind, have a lower level of regeneration.

The ecological survey of the Upper and Lower land areas has not found anything uncommon by way of species or ecosystems except for a population of tree fuchsias (*Fuchsia excorticata*). These are described as significant in the west Wellington context and locally common for Wellington. They are under threat from possum browsing. There are reasonable numbers of fuchsia in the Burrows Avenue Reserve, Karori Sanctuary, Wilton Bush, Trelissick Park and Khandallah Park. Only one Lot of the proposed development plan has the potential to significantly impact on this population and this is partly addressed through the proposed bush covenants.

The proposal includes piping a section of the stream that flows from the immediate catchment. The extent of this piping has been reduced but is still approximately 85 metres in length. While Council's Bush and Streams Policy does not support the piping of streams, this catchment is already compromised by the culverting downstream of the site. It is unlikely that the new proposal will cause any further deterioration of stream quality. Officers discussed the ability to retain a natural stream bed however this would make the development proposal unviable. Additional criteria within the Plan Change provide for fish friendly piping and the potential for stormwater management in association with landscape work in Karori Park.

€ **Cultural**

There are no known cultural sites or issues associated with either the Upper or Lower land.

€ **Recreation**

The Lower land is part of the dog exercise area that extends through the back of Karori Park. It is a reasonably well used thoroughfare through to Karori Park and is used as part of a circuit walk – utilising either the links up to Makara Road or through Karori Park. The area is

used for dog exercising. Comments from field staff indicate that the use of the area is not high but there is a consistent level of use.

The Upper land does not have a formal track network. It is however used by walkers and for dog exercising on an informal basis – as the land is in private ownership. The stream provides a degree of access up into the area. The proposed layout for the land exchange includes the preservation of public access from Makara Road through to Karori Park and from the road end up the stream bed.

The exchange has the potential to provide a better track network using the accessways from Karori Park to the north. The Upper land is steeper and therefore less able to be used for all forms of recreation but there is sufficient flat land in the vicinity on the adjacent Karori Park.

It is suggested that the dog exercise area should relocate to the land that is ultimately to be held in public ownership. This will require an adjustment to the Bylaw in due course.