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MINUTES ATTACHMENTS STRATEGY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

9AM, WEDNESDAY 22 MARCH 2023

COUNCIL CHAMBER, FIRST FLOOR
CIVIC ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
32 THE SQUARE, PALMERSTON NORTH

STRATEGY & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

22 March 2023

Public Comment

1. Public comment Rosemary Watson - Waterloo Park proposed land exchange

4

Subject: FW: Public comment re agenda item 15, "Part Waterloo Park - Proposal to exchange land "- upcoming Strategy & Finance Committee meeting

Attachments: RoxburghTilburyfoodmap.pdf

From: Doug Kidd
Sent: Monday, 20 March 2023 3:00 PM
To: Vaughan Dennison <vaughan.dennison@pncc.govt.nz>; Karen Naylor <Karen.Naylor@pncc.govt.nz>; Mayor <Mayor.Mayor@pncc.govt.nz>; Mark Arnott <mark.arnott@pncc.govt.nz>; Brent Barrett <Brent.Barrett@pncc.govt.nz>; Lew Findlay <lew.findlay@pncc.govt.nz>; Pat Handcock <pat.handcock@pncc.govt.nz>; Leonie Hapeta <Leonie.Hapeta@pncc.govt.nz>; Lorna Johnson <Lorna.Johnson@pncc.govt.nz>; Orphee Mickalad <orphee.mickalad@pncc.govt.nz>; William Wood <william.wood@pncc.govt.nz>; Kaydee Zabelin <kaydee.zabelin@pncc.govt.nz>
Cc: Hannah White <hannah.white@pncc.govt.nz>
Subject: Public comment re agenda item 15, "Part Waterloo Park - Proposal to exchange land "- upcoming Strategy & Finance Committee meeting

To: PNCC Strategy & Finance Committee Chair and Members
From: Rosemary Watson,

Re: PNCC Strategy & Finance Committee Meeting, 22 March 2023, Item 15
Report: Part Waterloo Park - Proposal to exchange land

Greetings to all.

I'm writing this to you as an individual, but much written here also represents the current general viewpoint of my neighbours from Tilbury Avenue.

Direct residential neighbours of the proposed reserve land exchange area recognise the need for new housing in the city, and support in principle the rezoning of industrial land in the Roxburgh Crescent area for development of suitable residential housing.

They also support Option 2 of the current report: "Decline the proposed reserve exchange".

They value 'their' green-space reserve strip and don't want to lose it, for a variety of reasons: some chose specifically to live in their current homes because of the non-built environment behind their sections. Most of those neighbours would experience loss of amenity of some sort if the reserve strip were to be taken away; some of that would be human experience and some would likely be in decreased property values.

Personally, as a keen gardener with most of my section area being behind my property, I would be devastated to have buildings up to 11 m high as close as 1 m from my north-facing boundary, with resultant loss of sunlight, excess shading and loss of privacy through overlooking my own green living space.

Retaining the reserve strip could actually also enhance the value of sections at the southern end of the Roxburgh Crescent development, compared to them having direct residential properties on their back fence.

Addressing points in the tabled report re the current buffer strip reserve:

3.3 Trees

Though the trees are valued by most residents for their birdlife (ruru and tui most prominent natives), and by some for their dappled shade, it is acknowledged that eucalyptus trees especially can and do shed branches. When prior approaches to PNCC have been made by Tilbury Avenue residents to trim the trees for safety etc. they have not been successful. There is some irony in the fact that the trees are now seen as a risk to adjacent housing, and are “likely to require removal”, or “would need to be removed” (section 4.5), if Plan Change E residential development were approved.

3.4 Green waste and weeds

Past lack of maintenance of the buffer strip saw worse-than-current weed problems from under the trees up to the dead end. Some Tilbury Avenue residents did place lawn clippings under the trees to attempt to kill off ‘wandering Jew’ etc. In December 2019 I approached PNCC about the weed problem, and he facilitated a clean up of the area, except for the very end as per Figure 5; maintenance has been better since then. Recently, some Tilbury Avenue residents have put lawn clippings under the trees, as mulch to support the growth of native species planted in an attempt to enhance the area. Much of the other ‘green waste’ on the ground is from natural bark and twig/leaf shedding by the large trees.

5.4 Safety

The dead end nature of the buffer strip has not yet proved undesirable to nearby residents from a safety point of view: it is not known why this might change were it to remain a dead-end between two rows of residential properties instead of one and the current industrial zone.

3.5 Recreation value/public amenity

Whilst the area is visited by more people than just the immediate residents, it is acknowledged that the buffer strip currently does have a low level of recreation value to the wider community.

It is also acknowledged that a reserve in the proposed new location could enhance the new public access to the Manawatu River Park.

However, whilst the new reserve proposed for the exchange is provisionally “an area of similar value”(section 1.4) to the current buffer strip, it would appear to include a significant amount of vehicle parking (section 4.3). This would provide value to River Park users largely from outside the new development, but would not directly benefit the new residents. Furthermore, it would result in a net reduction of reserve green space in the area, and the reserve part which is to be green space is likely to have shallow lower quality soil due to the probable need for site remediation following its industrial use. Thus from a green space perspective the proposed exchange would not seem to be of similar value, as mentioned above.

It is pertinent to note the latest report on green space in city planning recently tabled by Simon Upton, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, and discussed in various media, including our local Manawatu Standard just this weekend (references below). Some general take-outs this reader got from the document are as follows:

- Planning for green infrastructure should be as important as planning for hard infrastructure
- Some extra legislation might needed to promote/enable this
- Some green spaces are better in some respects than others
- Public green space is important as private green space can often be lost due to infill etc.
- It’s desirable to improve the quality of existing green space on publicly owned land
- If public green space is lost, it can’t be recovered

With those factors in mind, the need for a land exchange should be questioned.

Why does the neighbourhood have to have either.../or...? (‘pinching from Peter to pay Paul’)

Why could it not be both.../and...?

How would an attractive River Park entrance have been planned for if there were no buffer strip available for potential exchange?

In a development of this size, where the landowner/developer stands to potentially gain considerable capital value by the rezoning from industrial to residential, even if there were no current legal requirement, surely there should be some moral obligation to provide a certain amount of public reserve area? Would there not be several routes for this, via development contributions, other financial contributions or land donations for example?

Or, at this stage, do the agreed bespoke rules for development on this site specifically preclude those provisions for some reason?

So, both reserve areas if possible please, PNCC and Higgins.

Another opportunity - community kai

It is requested that another opportunity might be considered by PNCC, and specifically now, by the Strategy and Finance Committee, yourselves, that of using public green space land in the area, including the current buffer strip, as a community food production area. This would also appear to contribute to PNCC's desired goals and actions in the area (as per Compliance and Administration section in tabled report). Further, there would be direct societal benefits to the local community via place-making and enhancement of human health through better nutrition etc.; and it would contribute to local food resilience. There are presently no known specific public/community kai areas in the Hokowhitu area.

The Waterloo Park reserve area between the stopbank and the houses at the end of the bowl of Tilbury Avenue cul-de-sac (which, if assessed, would also probably be viewed as currently under-used by the general public) has apparently been considered historically for use as a community garden, though obviously this did not eventuate.

In the more recent past, some Tilbury Avenue residents have thought that the Reserve land above, together with the current buffer strip on the north side of Tilbury Avenue, could be a good overall site for community food production, but as keen gardeners with our own sections, or simply busy people, the concept hasn't been considered further until now.

In the middle of last year, Kainga Ora indicated their plans to remove four houses near the end of Tilbury Avenue, and one in Ayr Place, and build thirteen (subject to final plans) dwellings on smaller sites in their place, in an area that directly borders the Waterloo Park reserve.

Then, last November, PNCC announced the Plan Change E proposal to rezone the Roxburgh Crescent area to residential medium density housing, with up to 123 new houses on small sites.

Lots of new houses on small sections coming into the immediate area of the reserve land lend much more current importance to the idea of community food-growing and hence food resilience in the neighbourhood. Having Waterloo Park reserve, including the buffer strip, as a location for this, would lead to greater public amenity value and use of both sections of the reserve area.

Also, with Tilbury Avenue now facing intensification of housing on both sides, it would prevent loss of a part of the street's 'green lungs'.

Initial responses from PNCC have suggested that the idea of a community food-growing space is not supported due to poor access with the current layout, and possible contamination issues.

Retaining the buffer strip as part of the reserve is key to overcoming access issues, as well as providing a larger area for kai. Please refer to attached map document. The plans for the new Roxburgh Crescent development show a pedestrian and cyclist access from new proposed road A out to Ruahine Street (where Zander Engineering is currently situated). It would seem that with relatively minimal extra input, a

small extension of pedestrian access could be provided into the current dead end of the buffer strip (options at position 1 on map). This would provide an easy street to street connecting pedestrian route through the two parts of the reserve/kai area, past the Hokowhitu Scout Hall, to Ayr Place. Another pedestrian access from the Roxburgh Crescent development to the reserve strip could be included between planned sections at the south end of proposed street B (position 2 on map).

It has recently been established that there is actually no evidence for contamination of either of the above parts of Waterloo Park reserve, in either Horizons' HAIL register or PNCC records. Indeed, PNCC last year planted a few fruit trees in the reserve area near the Scout Hall, which would certainly not have been sanctioned were there indications of possible site contamination.

The reserve site would seem to meet many of the other desirable criteria for community food production re soil type, water, toilet access, sunlight, shelter, and so on.

At this stage, it is envisaged that, rather than having individual vegetable plots/gardens, there would be more of a large communal/community orchard area or productive park with a variety of size- and site-suitable fruit and nut trees and berry plants/fruited shrubs, with maybe a herb garden and a foraging area. Planting of trees is also one of the best ways to improve the quality of existing green space in terms of air filtration, cooling effects, and 'slowing down' heavy rain. There is too the possibility of the area becoming an educational place where pruning, training and espalier techniques etc. could be taught to the wider public, as at the Ashhurst community orchard.

A wider more ambitious vision would be to also try to incorporate suitable planting into at least part of the Horizons owned 'bowl' of land between the stopbank and the current Higgins land, up to the proposed new public access to the River Park. (Possible 'indicative extension to Higgins property' in this area, and possible contamination issues, to be taken into account.) This could also allow another access point to/from Roxburgh Crescent from the kai area, and also enhance accessibility of the kai area to River Park users (position 3 on map). And depending on Manawatu River Park visions and regulations, might there also be the possibility of suitable larger nut trees etc. as specimens on the river side of the stopbank in this area (summer shade as well as food)?

However, back to the present...

Community food production areas should rightly be requested/initiated by the community. As such, the idea has been generated and immediate local interest gauged.

So far, there has been limited specific engagement with PNCC. Thanks go to Cr. Wood for taking the time back in December to visit the area, discuss the proposed Plan Change E and related matters including the possible reserve exchange and community kai, and then facilitating answers to further questions via Councillor Help. Thanks also to Cr. Johnson for initial contact re community kai, which has not progressed further due to the proposed reserve exchange.

There has also been early contact with Kai Resilience project manager at Environment Network Manawatu.

It will be relatively simple to get the opinions of the wider current local community; it just involves walking and talking, and it takes time.

The Kainga Ora local community engagement team have been approached to offer their views re the community kai concept on behalf of their existing and eventual new clients in the area (awaiting response).

However it's impossible to really engage with a large part of the neighbourhood about this right now, as it simply doesn't exist: the homes haven't been built yet; the families aren't there.

But it must be right to try to consider and advocate now for those future residents (let's say approx. 120 new houses over the two developments, and average 3 people per house, so maybe 360 new neighbours)

whose sections may be able to accommodate a veggie box or two, but simply won't be large enough for larger food-growing ventures. Hence this submission.

If the reserve buffer strip is lost now, it cannot be regained later, and the chance for a kai area, with its associated benefits to new and existing residents, is likely lost with it.

As per Simon Upton's report, page 140:

"...the choices we make today about how we want to manage population growth, urban form and green spaces will be the ones we live with forever".

Please support Option 2.

Thank you for reading and considering this submission to the Committee.

Rosemary Watson (any mistakes/typos herein all mine!)

References:

<https://pce.parliament.nz/publications/are-we-building-harder-hotter-cities-the-vital-importance-of-urban-green-spaces/>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ninetoon/audio/2018882187/save-our-green-space-new-report>

<https://www.interest.co.nz/public-policy/120330/parliamentary-commissioner-environment%C2%A0simon-upton-sets-out-case-protecting>

Manawatu Standard Weekend, Saturday March 18th 2023, page 11

