

10 December 2012

Draft Town Belt Management Plan
Freeport Parks and Gardens (REPL01)
Wellington City Council
P.O. Box 2199
Wellington 6140

Re: Draft Town Belt Management Plan (October 2012)

This submission is from the Architectural Centre, an incorporated society dating from 1946, which represents both professionals and non-professionals interested in the promotion of good design.

1. Support for the Draft Plan.

We endorse the Town Belt guiding principles.

The Architectural Centre agrees with the intention that there is no further loss of the Town Belt, and considers that the recreational importance of the Town Belt is paramount. We support council management in terms of revegetation.

We support ambitions to make connections to other green corridors in the city.

In situations where removal of Town Belt land occurs outside the Council's control we support the Council's aim to pursue the replacement of this land with open space of equal value or character to be returned to the Town Belt. In addition we would note that some possible uses of Town Belt land (e.g. roading) may require land additional to the equal area in order to provide mitigation (e.g. for pollution effects).

We support connections between the Basin Reserve and the Town Belt.

2. Cultural Significance of the Town Belt

We consider that while the Town Belt is predominantly vegetation, the idea of a town belt is culturally and historically specific, and so recognition of the Town Belt as a cultural artefact is also important. This is reflected in the historical background provided in the Draft Town Belt Management Plan. In the ongoing cultural development of the Town Belt is there a role, in addition to the role of mana whenua, for the Wellington Sculpture Trust?

We support the recognition of cultural points of interest and significance, and also encourage the council to recognise new sites of significance and new ways of acknowledging important sites.

We consider that rather than acknowledging only Māori and European places names and historical information, the plan should recognise Māori and Tangata Tiriti (or Pākehā) place names and historical information, to recognise the citizens of Wellington who are not of Māori or British descent, and their contribution to the Town Belt.

3. Buildings

The Architectural Centre considers that the provision of buildings to support recreation in the Town Belt is important. We support finding uses for potentially redundant buildings before proposing the removal of buildings. We also suggest that buildings in the Town Belt ought to have generous verandah spaces, so that they can provide for Town Belt users during inclement weather. We do not support the proposal to integrate buildings with vegetation via colour scheme to minimise visual impact. Waitakere in Auckland had a similar policy and this leads to tedium. We believe that being able to identify buildings from foliage is appropriate. Buildings should be designed to support the town belt, but they also need to be able to be legible so they are found easily and their function is understood.



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We also note that built structures have the potential to increase a city's resilience during times of natural disasters, and that community buildings in large open spaces which are clearly identifiable are important resources at such times and that this role ought to be anticipated for buildings in the Town Belt, and clearly signposted as such.

3. Transport

Where regularising of road alignment occurs we urge the council to include cycle facilities such as bike boxes and cycle lanes.

We are strongly against the widening of Ruahine St such that it encroaches beyond the road reserve and into the Town Belt, and consider that the road as it exists is a barrier preventing people from accessing the Town Belt, and that this barrier needs to be minimised.

4. Non-commercial use of the Town Belt

We consider that the Town Belt is to support non-profit leisure and community activities and do not support commercial activities being accommodated in the Town Belt.

5. The need to support a full range of recreational abilities in the Town Belt

We support greater provision for commuter walkers and cyclists, but do not consider that it is appropriate that the council should aim for as many paths as possible to be of an easy grade. We support accessible design, but consider that rather than aiming for all possible tracks to have disabled access, the council should identify key iconic views which have access via a number of different grades of walking/cycling routes. We support the council aiming to provide a full range of walking tracks from wheelchair-appropriate to those envisaged for higher fitness and skill levels.

We appreciate this opportunity to make a submission on this Draft Town belt Management Plan

Yours faithfully

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