Nelson City Council | Te Kaunihera o Whakatū

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19 May 2022

Memo To: Gina Sweetman

Memo From: Andrew Petheram

Principal Parks and Facilities Asset Planner

Subject: PRIVATE PLAN CHANGE 28 MAITAHI BAYVIEW SEC 42A PARKS AND RECREATION MATTERS

Introduction

1. My full name is Andrew Keith Petheram.

2. I have prepared this review on parks and recreation matters arising from the submissions and expert conferencing on the Private Plan Change 28 (PPC28).

Qualifications and experience

3. I hold the qualifications of Diploma in Parks and Recreation, Diploma in Horticulture (Lincoln), National Diploma in Horticulture (RNZIH)

4. I have worked for Nelson City Council since July 1986 as the Superintendent of Parks and Reserves, Manager of Parks and Recreation and more recently as the Principal Parks and Facilities Activity Planner.

5. I am a member of the New Zealand Recreation Association.

Code of conduct

6. I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses set out in the Environment Court's Practice Note 2014. I have complied with the Code of Conduct in preparing my review and will continue to comply with it while giving oral evidence before the hearing. My qualifications as an expert are set out above. Except where I state I rely on the evidence of another person, I confirm that the issues addressed in this statement of evidence are within my area of expertise, and I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from my expressed opinions.

Review of parks and recreation matters

7. I have been involved as a Council officer in the Private Plan Change since May 2021. I have reviewed the plan change provisions and am confident that most matters affecting parks and recreation activities and facilities will be addressed in the future.

Matters include:

7.1 Adequate stormwater provisions preventing runoff and contaminants entering the Maitai River and the swimming holes
7.2 Transport solutions for the safety of pedestrians and cyclists accessing recreational facilities via the Maitai Valley Road
7.3 Linkages to existing tracks and trails on the Botanical Hill, Centre of New Zealand, Sir Stanley Whitehead Park, Walters Bluff and Frenchay Drive

Joint Witness Statement

8. I participated in the Joint Witness Statement (JWS) related to Recreation and Open Space 13 May 2022. This memo addresses matters not covered by that JWS.

Submissions and what they raised

9. Submissions that opposed the plan change for parks and recreation matters:

9.1 Helen Black #S224.001, Ronald Thomson #S135.001, Wendy Barker #S308.001 and others raised the benefits to health and wellbeing of the availability of recreational open space and woodland.
9.2 Wendy Barker #308.001 in a detailed submission further raised '*It would spoil the five swimming holes which have been there for generations and are well used for active and passive recreation. Construction, excavation, sewage, stormwater runoff, sedimentation will adversely affect water quality and the use of the river.'*

10. Submissions based on the Plan Change being approved:

10.1 The Nelson Mountain Bike Club #S67.001 requested specific details regarding trail design and linkage be implemented. These matters could be addressed at the resource consent stage.
10.2 The Club, further, #S67.002, raised the matter of vehicles exceeding the 50kph speed limit on the Maitai Valley Road and requested the Council construct a segregated cycle path along the Maitai to the Waahi Taakaro Recreation Hub (completed 20 May 2022) and improvements on Nile Street. (a Transport matter)
10.3 Mic Dover #153.016 and Marc Gutenstein #S28.001 sought '*planning to improve and maintain the riverbank paths and facilities, planting and swimmer access points.'*

Existing recreation opportunities and facilities on Nelson City Council land in close proximity to Kaka Valley and Bayview

Walking and cycling including mountain biking

11. The Maitai Valley/Bayview area provides an extensive range of walkways and shared cycle trails. Linkages are provided from the development site to join existing tracks on the Centre of New Zealand, Sir Stanley Whitehead Park, Branford Park and to the Maitai Walkway. In my opinion these will meet the recreation needs of future residents and extend opportunities for existing users.

12. Currently there is no off-road cycling or walking path on the true right of the Maitai River beside the Maitai Valley Road from the Maitai Cricket Ground to the Maitai Camp. The road provides a popular route for runners and mountain bikers accessing trails further up the valley including the Coppermine Trail (one of the 22 Great Rides forming the Ngā Haerenga New Zealand Cycle Trails network), the route over the Maungatapu as part of the national Te Aotearoa cycle route, Te Araroa long distance walking trail and the Coppermine Mountain biking and walking trail.

13. The Maitai Valley also provides access into the Sharlands Valley trails network (located on private land) and the Codgers Trails network (around half of which is located on private land). At the time of writing an interim agreement between the Council and the landowner exists whereby the public can access the private land component of Codgers Trails providing they have registered online (a longer-term solution is being investigated). At the time of writing it is understood that the Nelson Mountain Bike Club has an agreement for their members regarding access to the Sharlands area.

14. The Waahi Taakaro Recreation Hub located at the Golf Course was opened in May 2022 and provides parking, a pump track and general trailhead amenities.

15. Increased traffic on the Maitai Valley Road, arising from both the Recreation Hub and from the Kākā subdivision, may impact on recreational road use safety until an off-road trail is built along the true right of the Maitai River. Ideally a shared path along the true right of the Maitai River is desirable but given the limited available space between the river, the road and the steep hillside, in some sections this would be difficult to achieve.

16. At the time of writing an upgrade to the Maitai Walkway from Gibbs Bridge to the beginning of the Waahi Taakaro golf course has started, including widening of the narrow section around Sunday Hole which has the potential for user conflict. This section of trail has seen a jump in mountain biking activity lately with the opening of a climbing trail (Koata Whenua) through private land, which is accessed from the Maitai Walkway around 350m east of Sunday Hole. A corresponding increase in parking at the Maitai Cricket Ground has also been observed. Several trails exit onto the Maitai Walkway within a few hundred metres of Sunday Hole.

17. A new cycle trail has recently been constructed linking the shared Maitai Walkway along the true left of the river to the new Recreation Hub at the Waahi Taakaro Golf Course. Pressure from increased dog walking could impact on cycling safety but it is expected that an emphasis on dog control could mitigate possible conflict.

Sportsground

18. The Maitai Cricket Ground, an adjacent sportsground, provides for general open space recreation, two football fields and a permanent cricket block. The ground is mostly used for junior play. Two freedom camping sites are permitted in the adjoining car park (the bylaw that allows freedom camping at these sites is due for review later in 2022). No public toilets are provided, the nearest being at Branford Park some 100-200 metres away.

19. Dennes Hole is located adjacent to the north- west corner of the ground.

20. The Reserves Management Plan for sports grounds acknowledges the provision of toilets when need has been determined. To date this need has not been assessed.

Swimming

21. Swimming, fishing, boating, picnicking, and general relaxation in or beside the Maitai River have formed a major role in Nelsonian's recreational activities including during pre-European times.

22. Swimming in the lower and mid reaches of the Maitai River is usually focussed on the five swimming holes – Girlies, Black, Dennes, Sunday and the hole beside the Maitai Camp Ground.

23. Given the shallow nature of the Maitai River upstream from Riverside Pool boating is generally limited to children in small canoes and inflatables in the swimming holes.

Fishing

24. Trout fishing is permitted all year. Fish and Game (Nelson) advise that trout are small in size and numbers are low. Increased numbers of residents in Kākā Valley are unlikely to affect an already depleted fishery.

25. Mike Tasman-Jones #S358.001 submitted on the impacts on whitebait and other native species.

26. Mic Dover #153.016 submitted 'this proposed subdivision would have negative impacts on taonga species such as kōura /freshwater crayfish, tuna/eels, and īnanga/native fish.

27. Since 2020 the Council has been encouraging breeding sites for īnanga by allowing the growth of long grass and by planting native vegetation along the river margins. Willows are being replaced with large growing trees to provide year-round shade and protection. This is programmed to continue. The future of īnanga and other native species will be dependent on water quality going forward. The successful management of sediment and contaminants through stormwater discharge at the resource consent stage is essential. This is a matter outside of my expertise.

Golf

28. The Waahi Taakaro golf course currently operates below user capacity and can accommodate increased patronage from within the City and nearby. It is unlikely that the proposed development will impact negatively on the golf course. An increase in population is likely to impact positively on club membership and not affect green fee player access to the course. The number of rounds played by club members in 2021 was 11,241 and 5,817 by green fee players.

Camping

29. The Maitai Campground is mostly used by visitors from out of town over the peak Christmas/New Year period and is unlikely to be negatively impacted by the proposed development.

Hunting

30. Hunting for pigs, deer and goats is undertaken on private land including that of Ngati Koata, and on Council reserve land. Currently the numbers of animals far exceed those targeted with numbers in pest proportions. In my opinion an increase in hunter numbers from this development will not impact on hunter or general public safety (hunters are allowed on Council reserve areas through a permit process which is unlikely to increase capacity for safety reasons).

Overall provision of recreation space within Nelson City

31. The Parks and Reserves Activity Management Plan 2021-31 (Parks AMP) provides criteria and identifies the recreation space required over the next ten years. The general requirement for Neighbourhood Reserves is that 99% of urban residential properties are within 800m walking distance of publicly accessible open space. The development site has not been considered through the Parks AMP process due to it not being zoned residential however the proposed open space meets the requirements of the current plan. A further neighbourhood reserve site may be identified along the Bayview ridgeline at the resource consent stage.

32. Sportsground provision throughout the City meets current and future needs and additional sportsgrounds are not required in this area. Council prefers to centralise their location to reduce maintenance costs and build on shared spectator and player experiences.

33. Several submitters asked about the process of turning Kākā Valley into a reserve. The site is private land and if the owner does not wish to sell to the Council the Council does not have the mechanism to force it to do so.

34. Conservation reserves, esplanade reserves and biodiversity corridors are acquired by the Council as suitable sites come available, usually through subdivisions. In this case the Council could not justify a further large reserve in this area. Nelson is

currently well above provision per resident for open space, administering over 10,000 ha of conservation and landscape reserves. Its provision of 213.5 ha per 1,000 residents is well above the NZ Median of 17 ha per 1,000 residents largely due to the inclusion of the Maitai and Brook water catchments. The esplanade widths of 40m minimum are appropriate considering the scale and location of the development proposed. Greater widths could not be justified given the ongoing costs of maintenance.

35. S292 (Monika Clark-Grill) refers to the recreation and leisure value of the public recreation reserves within the Maitai Valley and expresses concern that *"cumulative effects of the development will negatively impact on the peaceful and easily accessible amenity values present in adjoining spaces'*

36. The Kākā development will be visible from the Centre of New Zealand and some of the existing walking tracks on Botanical Hill but will be screened from the Maitai Cricket Ground and the Maitai Track. Apart from ongoing planting programmes the Maitai Reserves are not proposed for change.

37. Gretchen Rasch #S109.001 states *'that the substantial increase in traffic would make the Maitai Valley Road more dangerous than it is now and preclude its use by cyclists and walkers/runners.'* Refer to response at Cl,14.

38. Marc Gutenstein #S28.002 has '*concerns about the health of the Maitai River including the riverbanks downstream and adjacent to the Kākā development. There should be more specific Council planning to improve and maintain the riverbank paths and facilities in anticipation of greatly increased pedestrian, cyclist and leisure activities. These might include carefully designed toilet blocks, path reinforcing and planting, swimmer access points."*

39. Toilet blocks are provided at Branford Park, Sunday Hole and at the Golf Course. Apart from further consideration of need at the Maitai Cricket Ground increased usage is not expected to generate demand for more facilities.

40. Mike Tasman Jones # S358.001 asks for *'more certainty at this stage on stormwater solutions'.* He submitted that *'engineered solutions to control and shape the natural environment of the Maitai River would degrade both the wildlife habitat and the visual amenity of an extremely popular recreation area'.*

41. It is my opinion that such structures would need to be carefully designed not just to prevent contaminants entering the river but also to not impact on the visual character of the reserve. The rocky backdrop to Dennes Hole adds to the enjoyment of this popular swimming and picnic spot and is particularly important to protect.

42. The Council is currently undertaking a programme of riparian planting along the Maitai River from Nelson Haven to the Maitai Dam. Species are and will continue to

be predominantly native, indigenous to this area. 120,000 plants are proposed for planting over the five year period beginning 2021-25. 29,000 were planted in 2021 with a further 70,000 purchased for planting in 2022. The Council-owned surrounds of Dennes Hole, on both sides of the river are scheduled for planting in 2023.

43. In some selected picnic areas edible fruit trees such as walnuts, chestnuts, feijoas, figs and plums have been planted.

44. It is my opinion that increased numbers of nearby residents will put additional pressure on the popular swimming holes –Black, Dennes and Sunday and to a lesser extent the swimming hole beside the Maitai Camp. Increased population generally within Nelson City will also add to that pressure but at a lesser rate.

45. The main potential impact on recreation participation within the Maitai Valley from the rezoning will result from an increased local population using existing and proposed recreation opportunities in the Maitai Valley (and the wider Nelson area) with increased demand for, in particular, walking, dog walking, running, cycling, mountain biking and swimming.

46. Vehicle traffic between Ralphine Way and Nelson City, and from Ralphine Way towards the Maitai Camp, the start of the Coppermine Trail and the Dam will increase, impacting on cyclists and runners accessing the recreational facilities via the Maitai Valley Road.

47. Additional use of local recreation areas would result from any population growth in Nelson City. The development of Kākā Valley could be expected to intensify recreation demand sooner and at a greater rate. This increase in demand may require that Council hardens some local recreation assets – by, for example, adding wooden steps to access the water at local swimming holes where natural banks are becoming unstable, and the provision of a shared path along the true right of the Maitai River from Gibbs Bridge to the Maitai Camp, and to the start of the Coppermine Trail at Groom Creek. A further consideration could be a reduction in the current speed limit of 50kph along the Maitai Valley Road.

48. Toilet blocks are provided at Branford Park, Sunday Hole and at the Golf Course. Apart from further consideration of need at the Maitai Cricket Ground increased usage is not expected to generate demand for more facilities.

Anticipated recreation space shortfall resulting from PPC28

49. The Bayview residential area extension has been identified in the Parks AMP as requiring one neighbourhood park, which is currently under development. If PPC28 proceeds a further neighbourhood park will be considered along the ridgeline at the consent stage. Kākā Valley was not investigated at the time of preparing the Plan but Council officers have identified the need for one neighbourhood park which is provided for in the application.

50. The Bayview site, along the ridgeline, with the approval of the landowner, has been used informally by the public for walking and off-road cycling for a number of years. This is not public land and was made available through agreement with the

owner. Use mainly comprised a walking/running / MTB route from the Centre of New Zealand, above Sir Stanley Whitehead Reserve through to the end of Bayview Road. A future pedestrian/cycling route linking through to Frenchay Drive has been requested by several members of the public.

51. The primary effects on recreation from the Kākā site will be experienced outside of the development area, i.e. increased use of the nearby swimming holes, however analysis of the extent of these effects has not been seen. It is noted that much of the recreation in the wider Maitai Valley occurs on private land and therefore is not the subject of this evidence. In summary a shortfall in recreation space has not been identified.

Current recreational use of Kākā Valley and the Bayview sites

52. The PPC28 site is privately owned and apart from the trail along the ridgeline from the Centre of New Zealand to Bayview Road, has not been available to the public.

53. Adoption of the plan change does not result in the reduction of recreation activities on the Kākā Valley and Bayview sites.

New recreational opportunities proposed in the application

54. A neighbourhood reserve and children's playground centrally located on the valley floor is proposed for Kākā Valley as per the Parks and Reserves Amp 2021-31. Access to the proposed reserve will meet the recreation needs of nearby residents and meet the objectives of the Parks AMP.

55. An extensive network of tracks and trails is proposed to link to the Centre of New Zealand, Sir Stanley Whitehead Park, the Kākā esplanade reserves to the Maitai Walkway, the Maitai Cricket Ground, Branford Park and the City. These will add to the recreational opportunities available in the Maitai Valley.

56. The proposed esplanade reserves along Kākā Stream, and the area where it meets the Maitai River are expected to provide pathways, areas to sit, relax, interface with the water and enjoy the natural environment.

Environmental opportunities proposed in the application

57. Mic Dover #S153.016 asks for *'improved riparian planting along all waterways to a minimum width of 50m'*

58. It is my opinion that 40m riparian reserve on the Kākā Stream is adequate to provide environmental enhancement including stream protection and recreational access. The Nelson Resource Management Plan doesn't cover the Kākā Stream but provides for 20m on both river banks on this section of the Maitai River. The

reserve should remain unimpeded with hard structures.

59. The Department of Conservation #S310.02 asks for '*further detailed assessment of the significance of indigenous biodiversity of the Kākā Hill site'*. This could be addressed at the resource consent stage.

60. Collectively the enhancement of the existing Council owned areas and the protection and enhancement of the proposed biodiversity corridors and riparian reserves within the proposed development sites should in my opinion result in good environmental outcomes.

Conclusion

61. It is my opinion that subject to the recommendations below, adoption of PPC28 will not significantly detract from the existing recreational facilities and opportunities currently provided in the nearby area of the Maitai Valley.

62. The recreational facilities proposed – neighbourhood reserve, pedestrian and cycling tracks and trails will meet the recreational needs of new residents and add to and enhance the recreational opportunities available in the Maitai Valley.

63. I believe that the riparian and biodiversity corridors are appropriate to the current and future requirements of the subdivision and to the wider area.

Recommendations

64. If PPC28 is adopted I recommend that the following provisions are included to ensure the protection of the existing nearby recreation facilities and the successful integration of the proposed reserves within development the sites:

64.1 Maintenance or improvement of water quality in the Kākā Stream and the Maitai River to safeguard the recreational values of the public swimming holes.
64.2 Essential infrastructure is designed and sensitively placed to avoid visual and physical obstruction within the proposed esplanade or recreational reserves.
64.3 Retain the visual amenity of existing public recreation areas, for example Dennes Hole, by avoiding the placement of infrastructure services within public view.
64.4 Transport solutions implemented for the safety of pedestrians and cyclists using the Maitai Valley Road for recreational purposes or accessing recreational facilities via the Maitai Valley Road. This could be as a result of expected population increase within Nelson City but accelerated by PPC28.
64.5 Pedestrian and cyclist access and safety to recreation facilities is enabled.
64.6 Linkages to existing recreational tracks and trails on the Botanical Hill, Centre of New Zealand, Sir Stanley Whitehead Park, Walters Bluff and Frenchay Drive included in the Structure Plan.