6 Recreation

The play area at Central Park, Brooklyn. A flying fox and bike skills area are also provided.

Guiding principles

The Town Belt is for all to enjoy.

This concerns equity of access and use of the Town Belt. The Council believes that the Town Belt should be available for all Wellingtonians to enjoy. The Council is committed to ensuring that the Town Belt will continue to be improved with more access and improved accessibly features where it is reasonably practicable to do so.

The Town Belt will be used for a wide range of recreation activities.

The Town Belt should cater for a wide range of sporting and recreation activities managed in a way to minimise conflict between different users. Co-location and intensification of sports facilities within existing hubs and buildings is supported where appropriate.

6.1 Objectives

6.1.1 The Town Belt is accessed and used by the community for a wide range of sporting and recreational activities.

6.1.2 Recreational and sporting activities are environmentally, financially and socially sustainable.

6.1.3 Participation in sport and recreation is encouraged and supported.

6.1.4 The Town Belt makes a significant contribution to the quality of life, health and wellbeing of Wellingtonians by increasing a range of physical activity and providing active transport routes and access to natural environments.

6.1.5 The track (open-space access) network provides for a range of user interests, skills, abilities and fitness levels, and pedestrian and cycling commuter links.

6.1.6 Management and development of formal sporting facilities and associated infrastructure does not compromise the landscape and ecological values of the Town Belt.

6.1.7 To maximise use of existing formal indoor and outdoor recreation facilities by intensifying the use of sports surfaces and ensuring the multiple use of ancillary facilities, such as clubrooms, to reduce the demand for additional facilities on the Town Belt.
6.2 Policies

Recreation

6.2.1 Provide passive and/or informal recreation spaces in a variety of settings for people to enjoy time out, explore nature and learn in a safe environment.

6.2.2 The Town Belt will contribute to the citywide parks and reserves network where identified sites (see the sector plans in section 8) will provide sportsfields, neighbourhood parks, play grounds, skateparks, ecological connectivity and track networks.

6.2.3 Recreation events and programmes will be run on the Town Belt subject to section 9.4: Managed activities

6.2.4 Interpret the features and values of the Town Belt including the history and culture, ecology and recreation.

6.2.5 Sustainable cultural harvesting of plant material for non-commercial cultural purposes by Māori will be considered at designated sites.

Track (access) network

6.2.6 The Town Belt will be improved by providing clear information and signs, and improving the surface and/or by reducing the gradient of tracks where feasible.

6.2.7 Tracks will be shared use (ie pedestrian and cycle) wherever this is appropriate. Tracks are open for biking unless otherwise identified in accordance with the Open Space Access Plan (2008).

6.2.8 The open-space access network will be integrated with the wider city and regional access networks, and cycle and walking commuting needs.

6.2.9 Continue a programme for upgrading walking/cycling tracks in order of priority based on use and asset condition.

6.2.10 All tracks will be physically sustainable and have minimal environmental impact, as far as possible.

6.2.11 Tracks will be designed and maintained to defined standards in the Open Space Access Plan, with significant hazards identified and/or mitigated.

6.2.12 Develop more tracks within the Town Belt that are accessible and useable by people with limited mobility, push chairs and wheelchairs. This includes the able-bodied, people pushing strollers, the elderly and people with impairments or disabilities.

6.2.13 Develop a plan for additional beginner level/family friendly biking and walking tracks.

6.2.14 Maintain a practicable network of pedestrian and maintenance accessways to service the facilities, amenities, utilities and special features of the Town Belt.

6.2.15 The walkway system will be accurately mapped and interpreted, and this information will be freely available to the community.
Dog-exercise areas

6.2.16 Review the provision of dog-exercise areas and off-leash areas on the Town Belt during the next review of the Dog Policy. In particular Sector 3 Brooklyn Hills, Sector 4 Macalister Park and Sector 9 Mt Victoria/Matairangi.

Community gardens and orchards

6.2.17 Community gardens and orchards may be permitted, so that community groups can provide food, recreation and therapeutic opportunities for the community.

6.2.18 Community gardens and orchards on the Town Belt will be not-for-profit (ie no produce may be sold) and private allotments are not allowed.

6.2.19 No formal education or qualification may be offered on the Town Belt. Any environmental education activity can occur when it supports and complements the primary role and purpose of the Town Belt and fits within the definition of recreation in the management plan.

6.2.20 Assessment of applications for use of the Town Belt for community gardens and orchards will be according to the criteria specified in section 9 (Rules for use and development).

6.2.21 Licences for community gardens and orchards will be for a maximum of 10 years.

Sport and recreation parks and facilities

6.2.22 Ensure the availability of a range of sporting and recreation opportunities that satisfies the needs of citizens and visitors.

6.2.23 Development of existing or building new sporting, recreational and club facilities is limited to

- within the footprint of sport and recreation parks or
- within current leased areas and associated hard infrastructure, such as car parks.

Note: where the leased area is within a sport and recreation park (ie Wellington Football Club in Hataitai Park), the footprint is that of the larger sport and recreation park rather than the leased area.

The footprint of sport and recreation parks and leased areas are identified in sector plans and are subject to assessment against other Town Belt Management Plan policies and the rules in section 9.

6.2.24 Applications for the development of existing or new sporting, recreational and club facilities are subject to:

- an assessment of alternative locations that are not on Town Belt land for such a development
- research to confirm demand for such a development is required and sustainable for the sport
- the development minimising conflict with existing recreational activities and protecting landscape and open-space values (see 4.2.2)
- fulfilling the criteria set out in policy 6.2.23 plus the assessment criteria in section 9 and in particular policy 9.5.1.
- being consistent with the policies in section 4 (Landscape) and section 8 (Management sectors). See also policies in section 9 (Rules for use and development).

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22 This policy does not include tracks and associated structures such as signs.
• being consistent with the Leases Policy for Community and Recreation Groups (2012) where the policy does not conflict with this management plan.

• an assessment that is included in Appendix 5.

6.2.25 Support the use of the Town Belt by elite sport provided such activity complements and supports community use and access and participation.

**Sport and recreation clubs**

6.2.26 Clubs will be encouraged to share facilities and partner with other clubs subject to policies (see sport and recreation, parks and facilities policies).

6.2.27 Leasing of reserve land and facilities to sport and recreation clubs shall only be allowed where the activity is consistent with the objectives of this management plan and, as such, complies with the following:

- the activity is concerned with public recreation
- the activity is open for public participation (clubs will be encouraged to allow casual play at their facilities or, at least, that their membership shall be open to all members of the public).
- the maximum length of a lease will be 10+10 years. Lessees can apply for a new lease.

6.2.28 Leases will be administered in accordance with the Council’s Leases Policy for Community and Recreation Groups (2012) except where inconsistent with this management plan.

**6.3 Recreation role of the Wellington Town Belt**

The Town Belt as we know it today was set aside in trust for the people of Wellington through the 1873 Town Belt Deed (Appendix 1). This Deed identified that the Town Belt was to be:

“... ever hereafter used and appropriated as a public recreation ground for the inhabitants of the city of Wellington ...”

Interpretation of ‘public recreation ground’ has been the cause of disagreement and subject to changing perceptions over the years.

Recreational activity on the Town Belt was restricted in the latter part of the 19th century as much of the land was undeveloped and leased for grazing. In 1881 Newtown Park was officially opened as the first sports ground on the Town Belt and as sporting activities increased by 1910, Nairn Street Park, Kelburn Park and Wakefield Park were established. As part of this development private sports clubs developed and leased land for buildings. There was concern this exclusive use of Town Belt land was contrary to the principle of free public access. In 1908 legislation was passed through Parliament allowing the Council to lease up to a maximum of 100 acres (40.47ha) to sports clubs. This was followed by land being leased for a range of sport and recreation activities including bowls, dog obedience and croquet. In 2013 there are 42 leases for recreation sports and community groups on the Town Belt occupying 5.9ha (14.6 acres). Walking for pleasure, running, and mountain biking has continued to increase in popularity as the benefits of regular exercise on general health and wellbeing have been recognised. A 2009 survey of 1000 Wellingtonians found that nearly half use the Town Belt monthly for this type of informal recreation activity; 28 percent use it at least monthly for organised sport. Other research has identified the benefits to mental health of interaction (whether active or passive) with natural environments. The importance of children being able to play in an unstructured way in natural environments has also been widely documented in recent times.
When given options, the top three values of the Town Belt for Wellington residents (2009 survey) were:

- views from the Town Belt
- ability to enjoy nature/the outdoors
- protect native habitats for birds and other animals.

These all emphasise the value placed on the natural unbuilt environment of the Town Belt. Being able to connect with nature has positive effects on people’s wellbeing, including mental health.

6.4 What is recreation?

Although the intent of ‘recreational purpose’ is clear in the Town Belt Deed, attempting to decide what is (and what is not) a ‘recreational activity’ and whether it should be permitted on the Town Belt is not so straightforward. Definitions of ‘recreation’ change over time and in 1873 were likely to have meant something different to present-day interpretations. Many modern recreational activities (such as skateboarding, mountain biking and others) were not even conceived of at that time and it is also unclear whether leisure activities such as gardening would be classed as recreation.

The lack of guidance in the deed on recreational activities means that it is up to the Council to try to work out what is – and what is not – permissible through rules in the management plan.

The 1995 Management Plan defined recreation and put an emphasis on outdoor informal recreation because of the original instruction from the New Zealand Company to set aside land that “no buildings be ever erected upon it”. It recognises, however, that many clubs carry out formal (indoor and outdoor) recreational and sporting activities on the land.

The problem of defining what is and isn’t recreation has led to some conflict at times over the type of recreation activity permitted. It is proposed that rather than set out a specific definition of recreation the Council uses the broad purpose of recreation reserve as outlined in the Reserves Act 1977:

“... for the purpose of providing areas for the recreation and sporting activities and the physical welfare and enjoyment of the public, and for the protection of the natural environment and beauty of the countryside, with emphasis on the retention of open spaces and on outdoor recreational activities, including recreational tracks in the countryside”.

On that basis activities on Town Belt will not include:

- leases for childcare, Plunket and learning institutions such as schools and community centres\(^{23}\).

\(^{23}\) Section 61 (2A) (a) of the Reserves Act outlines these activities as suitable for leasing on local purpose reserve.
6.5 Existing recreational activities

The Town Belt provides residents and visitors with a wide range of recreational activities:

- **informal activities** such as jogging, walking, orienteering, gardening, biking, dog walking, skateboarding, children’s play, casual sport (eg kicking a ball), sightseeing picnicking and so on

- **organised sports** such as football, netball, rugby, hockey, tennis, cycling, softball and cricket. This includes more commercial ‘pay-for-play’ activities such as touch rugby, golf at the Berhampore Golf Course and squash at Club Kelburn.

See map on next page.

Many of these activities are limited to certain areas. For instance:

- **The track network** is used for walking (sometimes with a dog), running and mountain biking

- **Dog-exercise areas** are for dogs off leash

- **Community gardens and orchards**

- **Neighbourhood parks** are used for informal activities and may contain playgrounds and sometimes skateboard parks

- **Sport and recreation parks** (sportsfields) are primarily used for organised sports

- **Buildings and associated sports surfaces** are for club/group activities including bowling greens, croquet, the velodrome, tennis and netball courts and includes indoor sports such as squash, badminton and gym sports

- **Wellington Zoo**.

See the current uses map for each sector in section 8 for the distribution of these. All of these recreation facilities are managed as part of the wider parks network.

6.6 Informal activities

6.6.1 The track network

The notion of public access is integral to the intent of the original Town Belt Deed. The emphasis has always been on walking and running access and, since the 1990s, mountain bike access. Other activities include orienteering, dog walking, school cross-country and harriers.

Vehicle access is acknowledged as necessary for maintenance and service access to buildings. All other forms of motorised vehicles are excluded from Town Belt land except in designated parking areas.
The residents research (2009) identified walking as the most popular regular activity on the Town Belt (56 percent), followed by sightseeing (28 percent), commuting (25 percent), running or jogging (24 percent) and cycling (7 percent). Cycling may have increased since then, with the development of new bike tracks on Mt Victoria and Polhill Gully and events on Town Belt land. In addition, the respondents’ top priority for future investment was increasing the maintenance of walking tracks (24 percent).

Only a few tracks are accessible to wheelchairs and prams, including Te Ahumairangi lookout, Mt Victoria lookout, and parts of Central Park.

The Town Belt’s track network serves several functions:

- primary track networks along the eastern ridgeline from Mt Victoria to the south coast (Southern Walkway/Te Ranga a Hiwi) and along the western ridgeline from the Botanic Garden to the south coast (City to Sea Walkway) and through Te Ahumairangi Hill via the Northern Walkway
- secondary track networks in each sector linking suburbs and often acting as cycle and walking commuting links (Hataitai to city link)
- dual-use tracks for walkers and mountain bikers, except for part of Te Ahumairangi Hill, the City to Sea Walkway and the northern end of Mt Victoria/Roseneath
- bike skills areas on Mt Victoria at the southern end of Alexandra Road and 4x dual slalom track at Mt Albert.

The track network is shown in the map of recreation facilities for each sector (section 8).

Many of the newer tracks have been built and maintained by volunteer groups. The tracks are designed for dual-use except for a few that have been built as mountain-bike only tracks (to ensure the safety of all track users, for example downhill mountain biking activity). The Town Belt is an important mountain-biking area, especially Mt Victoria and Polhill Gully, because it is close to the city, provides an alternative to riding on the road, and has a variety of tracks for different skill levels. Wellington is renowned for its accessible tracks for mountain biking, attracting many visitors and new residents to the city.

There is ongoing demand from users for more beginner level/family friendly biking and walking tracks. More work is needed to identify where these could be situated.

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23 Wellington City Council Open Space Access Plan 2008 – Schedule A
**Dog walkers:** The track network is widely used by dog walkers with the Town Belt providing the largest natural area close to the CBD and inner city suburbs. There are 15 dog-exercise areas on the Town Belt ranging from the long ridgeline of Te Ahumairangi Hill to smaller areas, such as the corner of Liardet and Balfour streets in Berhampore. In a survey of dog owners in 2008\(^{24}\), Te Ahumairangi Hill ridgeline and Tanera Park were the most frequently visited areas on the Town Belt, with the area above the Terrace Tunnel on NZTA land the least visited. Areas are well distributed over the Town Belt with a gap between Tanera Park and Macalister Park on the west side. In addition, given the proximity of Mt Victoria to the city, and being the most visited sector of the Town Belt\(^{25}\) there is a case for reviewing the provision of areas here when the Dog Policy is next reviewed.

### 6.6.2 Neighbourhood parks and spaces

These are smaller parks/spaces serving the local community. They may contain playgrounds, maybe skate parks and typically lie on a cycle and walking/commuting route. Given the proximity of the Town Belt to inner city suburbs, several neighbourhood parks have been developed on the edge of the Town Belt. See the detailed sector maps for details of their location along with the catchment area they serve.

The neighbourhood parks and spaces on Town Belt need to be considered as part of the local park network when assessing the needs of the local community.

### 6.6.3 Community gardens

Community gardens allow residents to share in the creation, maintenance and rewards of gardening. They provide food, recreation and therapeutic opportunities for a community. They can also promote environmental awareness and provide community education.

A community garden is defined as:

> A small scale low-investment neighbourhood communal gardening venture, where the primary purpose is growing vegetables or fruit. Community gardens may have an explicit gardening philosophy, ie organic growing, they may be treated as one garden or they may allow participants with individual plots to manage them as they see fit. *(Wellington City Council Guidelines for Community Gardens, September 2009)*

Community gardens and orchards on the Town Belt will be operated as not-for-profit activities and there will be no individual plots.

Any environmental education on the Town Belt will not lead to a formal qualification and can occur when it supports and complements the primary role and purpose of the Town Belt and fits within the definition of recreation in the management plan.

In Wellington City there are already a number of different types of community gardens and orchards, including three on the Town Belt: the Tanera Community Gardens run by Mokai Kainga, Island Bay and Berhampore Community Orchard Trust, and Innermost Garden in Mt Victoria run by the Innermost Garden Trust.

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\(^{24}\) Wellington City Council Dog Exercise Area Survey 2008

\(^{25}\) Wellington City Residents’ Usage of and Attitudes Towards the Town Belt, 2009
Tanera Park Community Gardens

The increased interest in community gardens and orchards over the past few years has resulted in a number of applications to use Town Belt land and other urban parks and reserves. To assess these applications and ensure a consistent approach the Council has prepared a set of guidelines (Wellington City Council Guidelines for Community Gardens, September 2009).

Assessment of applications for use of the Town Belt for community gardens and orchards will be according to the criteria specified in section 9.5.3 (Rules for use and development)

6.6.4 Other activities

The Town Belt is a popular destination for locals and many visitors to the city. It is an accessible open space close to the CBD. There are scenic lookouts at Mt Victoria/Matairangi and Te Ahumairangi Hill and Alexandra Road is a scenic drive near Mt Victoria/Matairangi. Guided tours are also occurring eg Lord of the Rings tours.

The Town Belt also has the infrastructure to host events such as:
- mountain biking and mountain running championships
- sports tournaments/championship, eg athletics, hockey stadium, tennis.

There are some destinations that experience more demand from visitors – especially in Sector 9 Mt Victoria/Matairangi. The lookout area was upgraded in 2006 to enable better parking for cars and buses, improve interpretation and visitor experience and reduce environmental damage.

Policies in section 9 (Rules for use and development) will determine what commercial activities are acceptable on the Town Belt.

The Town Belt has the potential to be a site for the cultural harvesting of native plant species. The Council will work with mana whenua, urban Māori and other interested groups to establish protocols and conditions to ensure the sustainable harvest of culturally important plant species.

6.7 Sporting infrastructure

The 1840 plan of Wellington clearly states that land was to be “reserved for the enjoyment of the public and not to be built upon”. However, while it was the original intention of the New Zealand Company Secretary that there should be no building on the Town Belt, this stipulation was not included in the 1873 Town Belt Deed and the intention was not complied with over subsequent
years. Between 1873 and 1995 a large number of recreational clubs leased land and/or buildings on Town Belt land.

Since 1881, when Newtown Park was opened, the development of sporting infrastructure has occurred at a number of sites on the Town Belt.

There are a range of facilities providing for junior sport through to international competition. Facilities providing for national or international sporting competitions and training, such as the Renouf Tennis Centre, Newtown Park (athletics) and National Hockey Stadium, have developed to cater for spectators and the requirements of their particular sport. The specialisation of some sporting facilities can lead to more exclusive use.

At the other end of the scale some sportsfields cater for junior sport each weekend (eg Nairn Street Park, Tanera Park). A list of sportsfields is included on the next page.

Regional sport facilities have developed on the Town Belt due to the central location in the city and large spaces available for supporting infrastructure (eg grandstands). In the past there was a perception the Town Belt should accommodate sporting infrastructure with little thought to the loss of the natural environment.

The 1995 Management Plan contained policies on ‘Structure and Furniture’ that were more closely aligned with the original 1840 intention. One policy states that “the necessity for all buildings and structures will be progressively reassessed” and “structures, buildings and furniture which are no longer required shall be removed as soon as practicable”.

The recreation objective is “to ensure that there will be no additional land area developed for organised recreation facilities (formal recreation)...”.

The Town Belt is made up of a series of neighbourhood parks, sportsfields and reserve areas. The emphasis is on maintaining the open-space environment and the public recreation and environmental opportunities and benefits this open space provides. A building for a swimming pool can in effect go anywhere; a track through a native bush remnant is an experience that only an open space (most often a park) can provide. Infrastructure for recreation activity must not be provided to the detriment of open-space values.

Athletics at Newtown Park  Junior football game at Wakefield Park
### Table: Current uses at sports and recreation parks on the Town Belt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park</th>
<th>Winter sports codes</th>
<th>Winter grading *</th>
<th>Summer sports codes</th>
<th>Summer grading *</th>
<th>Indoor sports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kelburn Park</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Squash</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td></td>
<td>5-a-side football</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Croquet</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tanera Park</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Fencing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Renouf Tennis Centre (Central Park)</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tennis Martial arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nairn St Park</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prince of Wales</td>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Te Whaea</td>
<td>Football</td>
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<td>Touch rugby</td>
<td>Artificial</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td></td>
<td>5-a-side football</td>
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<td>Rugby League Park</td>
<td>Rugby (training)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Rugby (training)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Macalister Park (includes Liardet)</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Medium and low</td>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td>Medium and low</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Touch rugby</td>
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<td>Wakefield Park</td>
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<td>Cricket</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Touch rugby</td>
<td></td>
<td>Artificial</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5-a-side football</td>
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<td>Berhampore Golf Course</td>
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<td>Martin Luckie Park</td>
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<td>Softball</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rugby League</td>
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<td>Ultimate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tennis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mt Albert Park</td>
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<td>Ultimate</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Shooting</td>
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<td>High Artificial</td>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>High Artificial</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
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<td>Newtown Park</td>
<td>Football (training)</td>
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<td>Athletics Football</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(training)</td>
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<td>Melrose Park</td>
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<td>Cricket</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hataitai Park</td>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Softball</td>
<td>High and low</td>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Tennis</td>
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<td>Darts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Netball Cycling</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cycling</td>
<td></td>
<td>Badminton</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Sportsfield gradings =  
  High (national or international competition)  
  Medium (regional or senior competition)  
  Low (junior or social competition or training)
The 2009 residents study\(^{26}\) found the public:

- supported the upgrade of existing facilities rather than the development of new ones
- opposed new developments occurring throughout the Town Belt
- supported restricting new developments to existing sports hubs\(^{27}\) (eg Rugby League Park/Te Whaea, Wakefield Park, Newtown Park, Mt Albert Hockey Stadium and Hataitai Park)
- opposed active removal of buildings and infrastructure.

In addition, 39 percent of those surveyed saw further development and commercialisation as the main threats to the Town Belt, and 52 percent opposed commercial recreation activities, such as a golf driving range, with support for future cafés on the Town Belt being evenly split.

This plan accepts some building and infrastructure is necessary to provide for the wide range of sporting and recreation activities that occur on the Town Belt and to retain some flexibility for their future development. However, this needs to be balanced against the incremental increase in ‘developed’ parts of the Town Belt and the resulting perception of a reduction in public access to areas once there are buildings or when land is leased to community clubs and organisations.

This plan identifies the sports and recreation parks:

- where more intensive development could occur to meet growing demand for residents (eg Wakefield Park)
- that will be retained at their current status to protect the open-space values of the Town Belt (eg Kelburn Park)

It is essential there is efficient/high use of existing buildings before new developments proceed. This can be achieved by:

- encouraging the co-location of groups/sharing of buildings and/or resources (ie ‘sportsville’\(^{28}\))
- monitoring the use of buildings to ensure that use remains high
- developing strict criteria around development or expansion of existing buildings and associated infrastructure, (such as lease buildings, Council changing rooms and toilets) and/or construction of new ones. This includes preventing new development from impinging on natural areas within the Town Belt.

Appendix 5 outlines the process and assessment criteria for proposed developments on the Town Belt.

### 6.7.1 Sport and recreation parks (sportsfields)

The sport and recreation parks are managed as a citywide network. A large portion of these have been developed on the Town Belt and are an integral part of this network. The Town Belt provides large areas of accessible land close to the city. Around 58.5ha (or 11 percent) of the land managed in this plan is identified as sport and recreation park\(^{29}\).

Council sportsfields are under growing pressure with increasing demand from sports groups, particularly from football. The pressure point is from April to August with ground closures occurring regularly during the winter season.

\(^{26}\) Wellington City Residents’ Usage of and Attitudes Towards the Town Belt, 2009

\(^{27}\) Hubs are groupings of sport and recreational facilities. The hubs offer a wide variety of both casual and organised activities, for a diverse range of people within the community (Wellington City Council Recreation Strategy 2003).

\(^{28}\) The sportsville model is where sports clubs form partnerships or collaborate with other clubs. The sportsville concept can involve sports clubs sharing ideas, resources, knowledge and skills. In some cases sports clubs will share buildings or amalgamate. The model aims to foster a sustainable future for sports clubs (Wellington City Council Recreation Strategy 2003).

\(^{29}\) The area excludes Berhampore Golf Course.
The city has limited land suitable for developing into sportsfields. The artificial sportsfields at Nairnville Park, Te Whaea, Wakefield Park and Wellington College provided a great deal of extra capacity during the 2012 winter, with those fields often used over 50 hours a week during peak times. To reduce the pressure on grass fields and improve the quality of sports competition, the Council plans to develop more artificial sportsfields over the next five years in other parts of the city, including Alex Moore Park in Johnsonville. The Council has also entered into a partnership with St Patrick’s College to develop an artificial sportsfield in Kilbirnie.

The growth and improvement in facilities, however, brings with it the need to upgrade infrastructure to cater for increased use, ie car parking, changing facilities, floodlighting, fencing, toilets and so on. This can be problematical in some areas where parking is under pressure at peak times, ie Hataitai Park. New buildings and the infrastructure associated with development of outdoor formal sportsfields can result in significant impacts on the open-space values and natural environment of the Town Belt. To protect specialist surfaces (and the investment) fencing is often built to limit use by casual users, for ball control and to protect the turf.

At the other end of the scale there are sports not making full use of existing facilities. Bowls is one sport with declining numbers and club membership. There are currently two bowling clubs with leases on Town Belt land – Workingmen’s Club in Newtown and Victoria Bowling Club at Mt Victoria. Wellington Bowling Club in Brooklyn has been disestablished in the past two years, and Berhampore Bowling Club has relinquished its lease but will continue to use and manage the greens in conjunction with the Mornington Golf Club.

There has been an increase in demand for indoor facilities from sports such as basketball, volleyball, netball, martial arts, futsal and badminton. In addition some sports, such as tennis, are keen to cover playing surfaces to get all-year-round play. The recent opening of the ASB Community Sports Centre in Kilbirnie has helped to alleviate this pressure but interest in indoor facilities on the Town Belt is likely to continue. Indoor sports using the Town Belt include:

- squash with a 10-court facility at Kelburn Park
- tennis with six covered courts and 12 uncovered courts in Central Park
- Chinese Cultural and Sports Centre with indoor facilities at Mt Albert (including basketball)
- Harbour City Gym Sports at Hataitai Park
- badminton with an eight-court facility at Hataitai Park
- table tennis at the south end of Alexandra Road
- martial arts in the Renouf Tennis Centre and Scottish Harriers clubrooms
- fencing at Tanera Park
- darts at Hataitai Park.

Balancing the provision of a diverse range of recreation opportunities with maintaining public access to open space and the natural environment needs to be carefully managed. There are a number of informal recreation activities that use the more formal developed spaces for example, picnics, fly a kite, kick a ball around and for community events.

The 18-hole Berhampore Public Golf Course covers 37.2ha at the southern end of the Town Belt. The course is managed and maintained by the Council with the assistance of the Mornington Golf Club, which leases the former Berhampore Bowling clubrooms next to the course. The course is open to members of the public for casual play.

The 1995 Management Plan proposed a study to “assess the scope, scale, and facilities provided at the Berhampore Golf Links, and the development and management opportunities available”. This work identified options to reduce the size of the course to nine holes as well as develop other activities. One activity proposed was to develop a golf driving range on the eastern side of Adelaide
Road. This proposal did not proceed partly due to public pressure and concerns about a commercial operation on the Town Belt.

Numbers using the course have continued to drop over the past 10 years and the Council and the Mornington Golf Club have recently embarked on a three-year programme involving divesting some management responsibility to the club, including assisting with the collection of green fees, marketing and promotion of the course and some maintenance activities.

There has been a citywide programme to develop sport and recreation parks into multi-purpose community recreation spaces for both organised sport and informal recreation. Karori Park is a good example of this with the development of the perimeter walking and cycling track. A similar proposal is planned for Alex Moore Park in Johnsonville. There is an opportunity to develop similar facilities on sport and recreation parks on the Town Belt particularly given their proximity to the CBD and inner city suburbs.

**Elite sport**: There is increasing use of the sporting infrastructure for elite sport. For instance:

- national and international events at the National Hockey Stadium and Newtown Park
- training facilities for visiting sporting teams, such as during the Rugby World Cup 2011. There has also been growing demand from visiting Super 15 rugby teams, A-league football teams and sevens rugby teams as these sports have developed.
- as a base for professional and semi-professional sporting teams, ie the Wellington Rugby Football Union lease of Rugby League Park grandstand and the use of the park as a training facility for the Wellington Lions and Hurricanes. The Wellington Phoenix uses the changing rooms and Newtown Park number two ground for training.
- coaching and development, for instance at the Renouf Tennis Centre.

The development of elite sport and the associated professional support and administration can put pressure on existing facilities used for community sport. It’s important community use and access is not compromised by these changes.

However, elite sport and associated events are important to Wellington as a destination for major events, entertainment, and also to provide a pathway for talented young people to develop their skills and develop a career in elite or professional sport. Such sport can sometimes bring in external funds to improve facilities that can in turn benefit community sport.

### 6.7.2 Club facilities

Tennis, bowling and croquet clubs have leased areas for specialised playing surfaces and/or clubrooms. Other clubs, such as rugby, cricket and athletics, lease land for clubrooms. In addition, some clubs lease facilities for indoor sport including badminton, squash, darts and more recently Harbour City Gym Sports at Hataitai Park.

There are 42 clubs and community groups leasing a total of 5.9ha of land on the Town Belt. Most of these facilities have buildings that are only available for club members. Some, such as bowling clubs and tennis, are available to be used on a pay-for-play (casual) basis.

The location and number of clubs are shown in the map of recreation facilities for each sector (section 8). Many clubs sub-lease facilities to other clubs to make best use of the facilities and share costs as well as allowing casual play.
Leasing is permitted to enable the public use of the Town Belt by providing a wider range of facilities than would otherwise be available.

Over the past 15 to 20 years, public opinion has shifted in favour of informal recreation and access to the entire Town Belt. At the same time there has been growth in some structured formal sports, such as football, which has put more pressure on existing formal facilities. The shift to informal recreation was reflected in the policies in the 1995 plan, which identified that activities on leased land should be open to public participation and that leases should not restrict public access across the land except during times of active use. In practical terms this is very difficult to achieve given several sports have indoor facilities, including the Renouf Tennis Centre and Badminton Hall; and specialist surfaces such as bowling and croquet greens should not be accessed except for actual play because of the possibility of damage.

With the exception of sports such as football, many traditional sports clubs are experiencing declining membership. This issue has been further complicated by the rising cost of maintenance, building compliance and insurance. However, another influencing factor is the increase in casual sport (pay-for-play). Many people are choosing to participate in sport and recreation on a casual basis rather than committing to membership of a club. There is also more choice, and there have been a number of emerging sports such as floorball, handball, ultimate frisbee and futsal.

The Council is working with a number of clubs (eg bowls) to address sustainability issues. Many clubs are being encouraged to amalgamate or to share resources/facilities. This is commonly referred to as a ‘sportsville’ model.

**Commercial activities:** Running a community sporting team or club can be an expensive operation. There are fewer volunteers around to help run competitions, coach teams and maintain facilities and buildings. This has led some clubs to have paid administrators, coaches and players.

Some clubs are investigating commercial activities/opportunities to enable them to raise funds to run competitions and programmes and invest in their sport. This varies from charging for play, or sponsorship, through to running commercial facilities such as cafés and pro-shops.

Any approval to carry out commercial activity on the Town Belt will only be permitted to the extent that:

- the activity is necessary to enable the public to obtain the benefit and enjoyment of the Town Belt or for the convenience of people using the Town Belt
- the commercial activity complements and is ancillary to the group’s primary community or recreational activity
- and any excess funds generated by the group are in the first instance applied to any maintenance obligations the group has under the lease and then to the group’s community or recreational activity
- commercial activity does not require a new permanent building or structure.

Any application for commercial activity will be assessed (see Chapter 9 and Appendix 5) to ensure the activity meets these conditions.