

16. OPEN SPACE

16.1 Introduction

Open space covers a large proportion of the City. It encompasses a wide variety of environments from coastal habitats to mountain tops and from bush covered areas to playing fields, and includes areas such as parks and reserves that are available to the public for recreational use, both passive and active. Private and publicly owned land is included.

Activities and uses on publicly owned land are required to obtain permission (such as a lease or a licence) from the Council as the administering authority. This is in addition to any requirements under the District Plan and the Resource Management Act 1991. Council, as steward of much of the City's open space, is working to ensure Wellington retains the asset of its open space. All activities will also have regard to any relevant management plans and legislation (for example the Wellington Town Belt Management Plan, the Town Belt Deed and also the Reserves Act 1977).

The Inner Town Belt is administered under the terms of its own Deed and the Wellington Town Belt Management Plan. Most other publicly owned land that is held for recreation purposes has reserve status under the Reserves Act 1977 and is administered as such.

Council has an important role in administering open space on behalf of the public. People go to open spaces to escape the urban setting or their normal surroundings. The environmental qualities of open space such as openness, sunlight and tranquillity all contribute to its character and success. These should be as equitably and as easily enjoyable by older people and all others with mobility restrictions as by the rest of the public.

Open space is characterised by the fact that it has few buildings. It can be enjoyed and experienced from a distance as a visual distinction between built and unbuilt areas of the city. This enjoyment of open space from a distance also needs to be taken into account when activities in open space areas are being considered.

Many open space areas have conservation values as support or buffer areas for Conservation Sites, and in particular contribute to wildlife corridors. It is envisaged that some will eventually become Conservation Sites.

[Some land zoned open space has also been included as part of the District Plan's rules for identified ridgelines and hilltops, and Council's strategy is to maintain a relatively un-developed character in these areas.]^{PC33}

Open space is used for a variety of activities from which people experience enjoyment for different reasons. Three broad distinctions have been made to facilitate the management of activities that can adversely impact on open space. These distinctions are Open Space A, Open Space B and Open Space C.

16.2 Open Space A (Recreation facilities)

Open Space A land provides passive and active recreational opportunities. This frequently involves developed sportsfields, the provision of buildings or structures (for example, squash courts, clubrooms and storage sheds) to provide support for the use of the open space playgrounds and formal parks. It is recognised that structures generally detract from open space. However, the primary focus is on the need for recreation activities to be able to access open space areas. In order for people to be able to use and enjoy open space, it is acknowledged that facilities or similar structures may need to be built. Provision also needs to be made for equitable access to and use of all recreation facilities by all users and spectators with mobility restrictions (whether younger or older persons), such as by strategically located carparking and by wheelchair-usable paths which are both sensitively designed and properly maintained.

On Council-owned and administered land, Council priorities and funding will provide a balance for the community's recreational needs. Council also determines whether buildings such as sports halls need to be constructed on open space land if other land is available.

16.3 Open Space B (Natural environment)

Open Space B land is valued for its natural character and informal open spaces. It involves areas that are used for types of recreation that, in the broadest sense, do not involve buildings or structures. The intention is to keep such areas in an unbuilt or natural state. This type of open space encompasses both formal and informal open space elements. It includes walkways, scenic areas and open grassed areas where buildings are inappropriate. Its characteristics are minimal structures, largely undeveloped areas and open expanses of land. Most Open Space B areas are vegetated and often have ecological values or may buffer Conservation Sites.

16.4 Open Space C (Inner Town Belt)

The Inner Town Belt is valued for its historic, social and cultural importance. The Wellington City Council acts as trustee of the Inner Town Belt for and on behalf of the people of Wellington. The Inner Town Belt is zoned as Open Space C and identified on the Planning Maps. In addition to the District Plan requirements, the Inner Town Belt is administered under the terms of its own deed and also the Wellington Town Belt Management Plan.

16.5 Open Space Objectives and Policies

OBJECTIVE

16.5.1 To maintain, protect and enhance the open spaces of Wellington City.

POLICIES

To achieve this objective, Council will:

16.5.1.1 Identify a range of open spaces and maintain their character, purpose and function, while enhancing their accessibility and usability.

METHODS

- Rules
- Advocacy
- National Standard access design criteria
- Operational activities (Reserves management, Management Plans)

People's recreational needs differ, and recreation space must cater for passive as well as active enjoyment of the area. Recreation space often has multiple functions: an area may be used as a sportsfield and also be viewed as part of the landscape. To avoid the reduction of open space quality in general Council will continue to assess proposed recreational structures and buildings in order to determine if they can be located on areas other than open space. For these reasons rules have been included in the Plan to maintain and enhance the open spaces of Wellington.

Accessibility to the City's open spaces is an important aspect of their management, to ensure that everyone (including people with mobility restrictions) has equitable access to sportsfields, reserves and other open spaces. The City will promote enhanced accessibility through advocacy and its operational activities.

The environmental result will be the continued protection of the open character of such land.

16.5.1.2 Recognise the special status of the Inner Town Belt as public recreation land held in Trust by the Council under the Town Belt Deed 1873 and identify that land on the District Plan Maps.

16.5.1.3 Manage the impacts of activities in the Inner Town Belt in order to protect and preserve its special qualities for the benefit of future generations.

METHODS

- Rules
- Planning Maps
- Other mechanisms (Town Belt Management Plan, Town Belt Deed 1873)

The Inner Town Belt provides a backdrop to the inner city and provides for a wide range of activities and recreational pursuits. It is a significant part of Wellington's heritage. Council aims, where practical, to add land that was alienated from the original land area or that adds to the Inner Town Belt's visual continuity. All activities on the Inner Town Belt are undertaken in accordance with the Wellington Town Belt Management Plan, the Town Belt Deed and the Reserves Act 1977. Separate approval may be required under these documents in addition to the District Plan requirements.

The environmental result will be the retention of the open space character of the Inner Town Belt.

[16.5.1.3A To recognise the unique status of the Chest Hospital Heritage Area as reserve land surrounded by the Inner Town Belt and to facilitate the use of the Area whilst managing the effects of activities that may result in the loss of heritage and open space values associated with the Area.

The Chest Hospital Heritage Area is a unique area of open space land, compared with other Open Space C land, due to its history of use, listed heritage buildings and proximity to the Inner Town Belt. It is important that the buildings and surroundings are reused to preserve their heritage values and it is envisaged that some work to the site may be required to facilitate this. At the same time, it is important that any future development of the site does not significantly intensify the site resulting in a reduction of its heritage and open space values as this would be inconsistent with its reserve status.]¹

16.5.1.4 Recognise the special status of Wellington's Inner Town Belt and manage the impacts of activities in order to protect and manage its special qualities for the benefit of future generations.

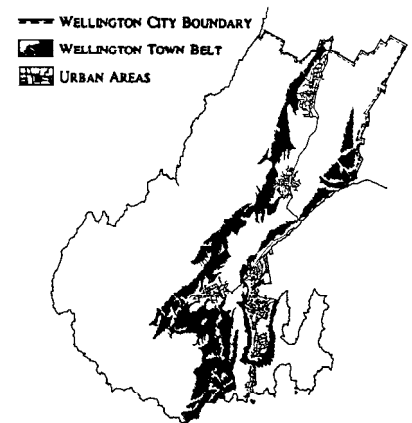
16.5.1.5 Identify land that contributes towards an Outer Town Belt that will provide an open, undeveloped edge to the City.

METHODS

- Other mechanisms (strategic planning)
- Operational activities (reserve management plans)
- [Rules]^{PC33}

Since the 1970s Council has been progressively working towards creating an Outer Town Belt for Wellington. Like the original Inner Town Belt, in years to come the Outer Town Belt will become an important demarcation line for the city and will provide recreation opportunities for the community. Council is committed to this long-standing aim and intends to acquire, or secure in other ways, land that can fulfil this function. Rules are included in the District Plan to control activities that reduce the open space character of such land, [particularly where located within identified ridgelines and hilltops.]^{PC33}

The environmental result will be the retention of a largely undeveloped open space area on the urban fringe.



Major Reserves, Including the Original Town Belt and the Outer Town Belt

¹ District Plan Change No.37 – Chest Hospital Heritage Area (Operative 6 July 2006)

OBJECTIVE

16.5.2 To maintain and enhance natural features (including landscapes and ecosystems) that contribute to Wellington's natural environment.

POLICIES

To achieve this outcome, Council will:

16.5.2.1 Identify and protect from development and visual obstruction landforms and landscape elements that are significant in the context of the Wellington landscape, and in particular significant escarpments and coastal cliffs.

METHODS

- Rules
- Operational activities (reserves management, management plans)

The Wellington faultscarp, coastal cliffs, skylines, areas of open space and areas of existing native vegetation are important components of Wellington's visual character. Where these are not protected by public ownership Council aims to restrict, and avoid, remedy or mitigate the visual impact of, any development.

The environmental result will be the protection of the significant features of the Wellington landscape.

16.5.2.2 Restrict the construction of [buildings,]^{PC33} structures and earthworks on [identified ridgelines and hilltops].^{PC33}

METHODS

- Rules
- Operational activities (Reserves management, Management Plans)

[The Council has undertaken a city wide study to identify which important ridgelines and hilltops should be afforded greater protection than less prominent landforms in the city. Visual values were paramount in determining the important ridgelines and hilltops but other natural, recreational and heritage values were also recognised. The important ridgelines and hilltops are identified on the District Plan maps as identified ridgelines and hilltops.]^{PC33}

Undeveloped [ridgelines and hilltops]^{PC33} are an important contributor to the landscape of the city. The visual intrusion caused by [buildings,]^{PC33} structures [and earthworks]^{PC33} can be [detrimental to the visual amenity of the open space zone and the surrounding area, and for this reason Council seeks to control development to ensure that any adverse visual effects can be avoided, remedied or mitigated.]^{PC33}. To prevent such effects, development on [identified ridgelines and hilltops] will be assessed to ensure that where buildings, structures and earthworks are to be located within identified ridgelines and hilltops overlay map, they are visually integrated into the landscape.]^{PC33}

Excavations or earthfills can leave unnatural forms and unsightly scars which detract from the amenities of an area. The city bylaws control earthworks to ensure that they are properly engineered, but the District Plan provisions consider the potential for effects on amenity. Council's aim is to ensure that earthworks do not cause any visual detraction from the landscape.

The environmental result will be the protection of significant skylines from intrusive new development.

16.5.2.3 Encourage retention of existing native vegetation and where appropriate re-introduce native cover.

METHODS

- Rules
- Operational activities (reserves management, management plans)

Many open space areas have areas of indigenous vegetation. Existing indigenous vegetation and established trees are an important element in Wellington's landscape and can also have importance as wildlife habitat, as linking corridors and buffer zones, and for soil and water conservation values. Areas of native vegetation will be retained as far as possible.

The environmental result will be the greater protection of indigenous ecosystems.

OBJECTIVE

16.5.3 To prevent or mitigate any adverse effects of the storage, use, disposal, or transportation of hazardous substances, including waste disposal.

POLICIES

To achieve this objective, Council will:

16.5.3.1 Require that the storage, use, handling and disposal of hazardous substances are subject to analysis using the Hazardous Facilities Screening Procedure and, where appropriate, the resource consent procedure in order that any potential or actual adverse effects are managed in such a way as to safeguard the environment.

METHODS

- Rules
- Other mechanisms (Health Act, Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 and its Transitional Provisions, Health and Safety in Employment Act, 1992)

Council is concerned that the community and environment should not be exposed to unnecessary risk from hazardous substances. The District Plan aims to control use of land in order to prevent or mitigate any potential adverse effects of hazardous substances by considering the appropriateness of the site location and other site requirements to avoid, remedy or mitigate the risk of accidental release. Although these are only two facets of hazardous substances management, others are outside the scope of the District Plan.

[The hazardous substance provisions of this Plan work in conjunction with the provisions for hazardous substances under the Hazardous Substance and New Organisms Act 1996. Controls imposed on hazardous substances under the Resource Management Act cannot be less stringent than those set under the Hazardous Substance and New Organisms Act 1996. This requirement is reflected in the rules for hazardous substances in this Plan.]¹

The Regional Council has developed rules in the Regional Plans to control discharge of hazardous substances to land, air and water.

The Hazardous Facilities Screening Procedure has been incorporated into the District Plan. Uses which have unacceptable potential effects will be located and contained where their potential adverse effects can be prevented or mitigated.

The environmental result will be a safer environment as a result of the safer storage, use and disposal of hazardous substances.

16.5.3.2 Reduce the potential adverse effects of transporting hazardous substances.

METHODS

- Rules (conditions on resource consents)
- Other mechanisms (advocacy and bylaws) [and NZ land transport legislation (including Land Transport Act 1993, Land Transport Rule: Dangerous Goods 1999 and New Zealand Standard 5433:1999)]²

Because there is always a risk of an accident, the transportation of hazardous substances potentially has adverse effects on the surrounding locality. Where practicable, transport of hazardous substances to a hazardous facility will be restricted to main arterial routes and avoid peak periods of commuter traffic.

The environmental result will be safer communities.

16.5.3.3 Control the use of land for end point disposal of waste to ensure the environmentally safe disposal of solid and hazardous waste.

METHODS

- Rules
- Operational activities (Waste Management Strategy)
- Designation
- Other mechanisms (Regional Plans [and Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996])²

Unrestricted land disposal of waste by landfilling is increasingly less environmentally acceptable as a method of dealing with the City's waste. For this reason, Council wishes to discourage the proliferation of waste disposal sites.

Council's Waste Management Strategy, which addresses waste disposal in Wellington City, includes guidelines on the environmentally acceptable management of the hazardous wastes produced in Wellington. The environmental result will be fewer and better-managed waste disposal sites.

16.5.3.4 To require hazardous facilities to be located away from Hazard Areas.

METHOD

- Rules

The likelihood of an accidental release of a hazardous substance is increased during a natural hazard event.

For this reason, Council wishes to discourage the development of new hazardous facilities in identified Hazard Areas.

The environmental result will be the minimisation of hazards and risk to the environment and people in Hazard Areas.

¹ District Plan Change No.35 – Hazardous Substances (Operative 6 July 2006)

^{1 and 2} District Plan Change No.35 – Hazardous Substances (Operative 6 July 2006)