

Tabled Information - Reference 007/13PT(a)

DRAFT TOWN BELT MANAGEMENT PLAN 2012

ORAL SUBMISSION FROM CHRISTINE MCNEIGHT

20 February 2013

I am here because for more than 20 years I have lived two doors along from the land referred to in the Draft Town Belt Management Plan as being part of sector 3 at the top of Abel Smith Street, the land we generally call the gully. I love living next to it because it is so beautiful and full of life.

I would like to request that the Council reconsider the recommendations in the Draft Plan and seek to return the gully to the Town Belt so that this vitality can be preserved in perpetuity.

In this presentation I will refer to some of the Guiding Principles of the Draft Plan and to its Objectives

Landscape Objectives p. 30

4.2.1 To protect the Town Belt a a predominately natural environment in contrast with the built environment of the city

4.2.2

Diversity of landscape and aesthetic experience

Patchwork of native and exotic vegetation

Maintenance of mature/large tree framework

4.2.4

The significant area of land that provides environmental services such as urban bio diversity, storm water management and as a carbon sink

The gully is only 10 minutes walk from Cuba Street. Because it is an inner city area, houses here do not have large gardens yet, because of the gully we feel extremely privileged that we are both part of the inner city and living on the edge of a forest.

The description on page 99 sets out the reasons for not reinstating the gully to Town Belt status. These include its small scale, location and aspect that add little value in strengthening the Town Belt's continuity and horseshoe shape and it's low ecological value. In fact it is these characteristics of scale, location and aspect which do give the gully its unique qualities that mean that retaining it meets to a considerable degree the Draft Plan Landscape Objectives.

Firstly, the scale of the gully is much greater than it appears on the map on page 94.. The 2 dimensional map cannot show the land area that makes up the steep sides of the gully thereby at least doubling the total land area.

Secondly, the steep sides and aspect of the gully referred to in the description mean that the floor of the gully is sheltered from the wind and quite shady and

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I understand it acts as a catchment area for rainwater from surrounding hills. This must be why so many broad leaf trees thrive there. Many of these trees are astonishingly tall for Wellington. They are mostly exotic, but I would like it noted, unlike the description on page 99, we are aware of only one tall pine there. Also at the very top of Abel Smith Street is a small area of totally indigenous trees.

OBJECIVE 5.4

Ensure the protection of indigenous habitats on the Town Belt so that the biodiversity of the Town Belt is protected, enhanced and functions as a well connected system

Because of the height of the trees and the dense canopy they provide they can support a varied insect life that in turn supports the many birds that use the gully for nesting, socialising and feeding. In the spring there is a gentle but continuous wall of sound from very early morning until dark. Broken, of course by Tui and parrots calls.

There have always been hundreds of birds there but the range of indigenous birds was limited to quite a few Fantails, Morepork, Grey Warbler and Kingfishers and there were lots of non-native birds. About 10 years ago the Tui moved in. Very quickly the magpies disappeared but the indigenous birds have remained.

Tuis now are nesting everywhere and as everybody now knows are extremely vocal in the spring. Around the edge of the gully, where it is sunny, there are many self seeded kōwhai, flax and several different sorts of cabbage trees that they feed off.

In the last three years the kaka and less commonly, kākāriki have moved in. In the last few months, that is since this last spring, we have noticed that the Kaka are not only there all day but you hear them long after dark and we have noted that some appear to be not banded. This suggests they are now choosing to nest here. There is certainly a wide choice of tall trees for safely nesting and feeding off.

The description on page 99 refers to the location of the gully as a a reason for excluding it from the Town belt as it does not link up with the horseshoe shape. The Draft plan assumes the Town belt must be continuous. However, from the point of the view of the birds, continuity at ground level is of no importance. All day long we hear parrots calling out to each other as they fly to and from the gully across Te Aro School, and on to the next substantial patch of trees below the university gym. From there they can fly to the trees that border the motorway. I understand from the Draft Plan that these parts of the corridor are also to be excluded from Town Belt status, but they seem to play a vital role in maintaining a suitable habitat for indigenous birds very close to the inner city.

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Principle 6:

The Town Belt is for all to enjoy

For adults the gully provides great visual character to the area but its recreational value for children in family groups could be enhanced at very little cost. Almost all day in the weekends, the school playground is visited by young families using the play area. If the gully were to be made more accessible it would provide a wonderful facility for them. There are parts of the area on the Devon street side that could easily be developed as walking tracks where the access is not steep. My neighbour has already shown you photos he took of what it is like down there. The tall trees and dense canopy creates a really wonderful atmosphere. There is almost no undergrowth down there so it is very accessible.

There may also be scope for a sort of high level path around the edge of the gully from the top of Abel Smith street to the school that would look out across the tops of the trees to be developed. It could follow on from the end of Abel Smith Street. We would welcome people using the paths out the front of our houses to access the gully.

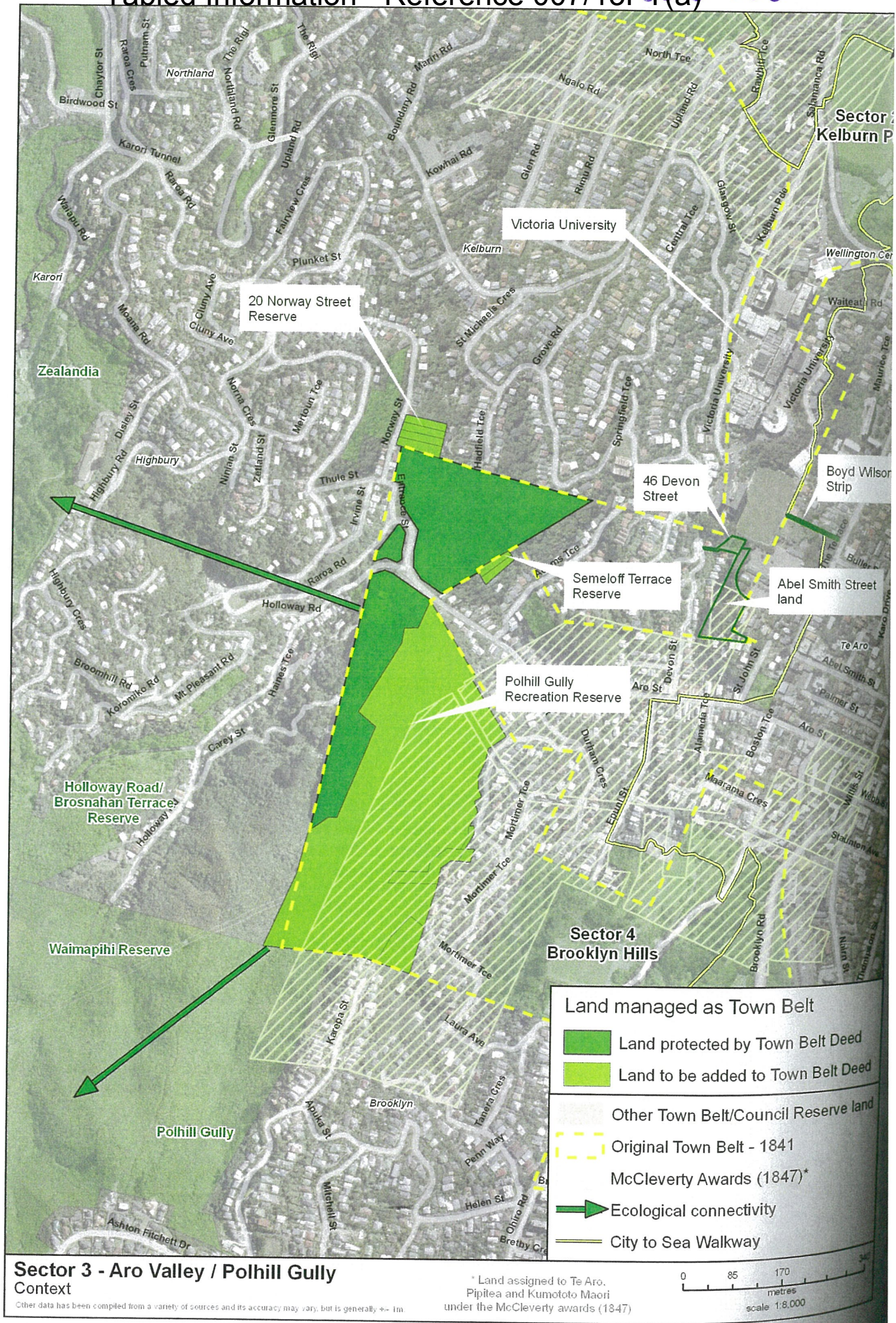
Principle 8:

The Council will encourage and support community participation

There is already a tradition of community participation in supporting the indigenous plant life and this could be developed further.

The land at the top of the Abel Smith Street steps was once just scrub land. It is now densely covered with native trees that were planted there in the 1990s by Bronwen Evans with support from the Council. These trees support nesting Tui and we often see parrots there.

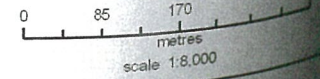
For all these reasons, but particularly for the sake of maintaining this habitat for the birds I hope I have demonstrated that the land at the top of Abel Smith Street is of high priority to the Town Belt and the current recommendations be revised and the Council seek to return the land to Town Belt status.



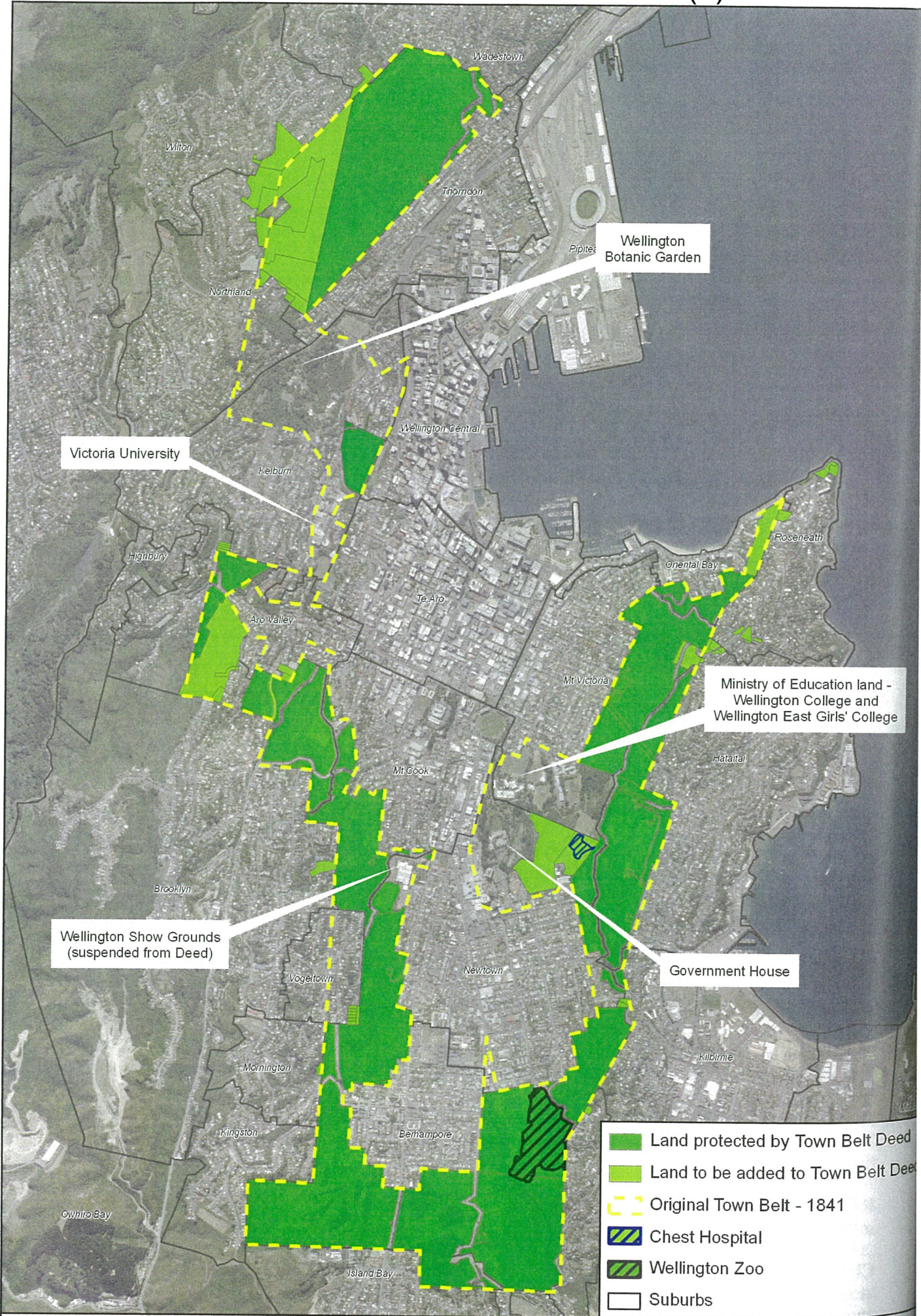
Sector 3 - Aro Valley / Polhill Gully Context

Other data has been compiled from a variety of sources and its accuracy may vary, but is generally +/- 1m

* Land assigned to Te Aro, Pipitea and Kumototo Maori under the McCleverty awards (1847)

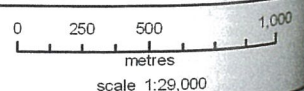


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Status of Original Town Belt

- Land protected by Town Belt Deed
- Land to be added to Town Belt Deed
- Original Town Belt - 1841
- Chest Hospital
- Wellington Zoo
- Suburbs



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Site name	Legal description and area	Description, location, current use	Previous policy	Discussion, criteria assessment	Recommend that;	Land covered by this TBMP
Raroa Reserve	Freehold, Scenic Reserve, Pleasure Ground under the PWA.	This is Council-owned land made up of a number of individual parcels. It is bush-covered reserve land along and below the east side of Raroa Road.	The TBMP 1995 identified this land as potential additions.	This land does not connect to the existing Town Belt and given its steep topography and aspect it has little visual connection with the Town Belt's horseshoe shape. It offers some landscape value to local residents, but not significant to enhance the visual character of Aro Street/CBD. It has limited recreational values. This land was not part of the originally envisaged Town Belt.	These lands should remain as Recreation Reserve and not be added to the Town Belt.	No
20 Norway Street	Lots 12, 13, 14 and 15 DP 995, CT 425/168, comprising 0.4027ha Held as Recreation Reserve subject to the Reserves Act 1977 NZ Gazette 1995 page 4478.	This is Council-owned reserve land that is covered in regenerating bush in the gully below Norway Street. It is near existing Town Belt.	The TBMP 1995 identified this land as potential additions.	This land does immediately adjoin existing Town Belt land and is perceived to already be Town belt. Although offering local landscape values and limited recreational potential, it makes operational logic to incorporate this land into the Town Belt.	This land should be added to the Town Belt.	Yes
Privately owned gully below Hadfield Grove	Privately owned gully.	This land is made up of the privately owned undeveloped gully being the residential properties in Hadfield Terrace.	The TBMP 1995 identified this land as potential additions.	This land lies below the residential properties in Hadfield Terrace and Kelburn Parade. Although bordering existing Town belt, they provide only local landscape value and have little significance in enhancing the continuity of the Town Belt's horseshoe. The recreational values are limited and they are not part of the originally envisaged Town Belt.	The Council will not pursue acquisitions of these lands.	No
Ministry of Education land, Abel Smith Street	It is described as Pt Town Belt, Town of Wellington, comprising 0.4170ha and sec 1226, Town of Wellington, comprising 0.4221ha. The land was included in the Town Belt Deed conveyed to the Council in terms of the 1873 deed. However, in 1931, the Crown under Act of Parliament took the land for educational purposes.	This land is owned by the Crown and used by the Ministry of Education. It is included in the Port Nicholson Block Claims Settlement Act 2009 and the Trust has the first right of refusal if the land is declared surplus. It is situated at the top of Abel Smith Street. Te Aro School uses about one third of the land. The rest of the land is made up of a 6000sq m steep gully bounded on the east by Te Aro School and on the west by the rear of properties on Devon Street. There is a track linking the school, Boyd Wilson Field and Devon St. The vegetation is mixed exotic trees, including sycamore and large pines, with an understory of natives and exotic shrubs.	The TBMP 1998 policy options for this land include: Option 1. Seek the return to Town Belt status of the area not occupied by Te Aro School. Seek agreement for the return of the school land when the school activity ceases. Option2: Seek all of the land for Town Belt purposes. Lease back to the school the area currently occupied by the school for peppercorn rental. There is no doubt that the area not occupied by the school should be sought by the Council for return to Town belt status. The land is heavily vegetated and significantly enhances the setting and enjoyment of surrounding residents.	This land is very isolated from any existing Town Belt lands. Its small scale, location, and aspect add little value in strengthening the Town Belt's continuity and horseshoe shape. It does provide some local landscape value to Aro Street. It has low recreational and ecological values. It was included in the Town Belt Deed 1873 but taken out by the Crown in 1931 for educational purposes.	Council will initiate discussions with PNSBT over the future of this land. Low priority for Council at market value.	No