

Plan Change 49—Open Spaces hearings

Submission by David Grant-Taylor

Tuesday November 2023.

In my submission of February 2023, I made a submission that covered:

1. The diversion of the use of the land from its apparent original purpose as a reserve (based on the source of the funds),
2. The proposal to take the land out of reserve and rezone as Natural Open Space, possibly with the inclusion of a zone of Significant Natural Area,
3. Lack of specificity in the position and intent of a proposed road.

Optimism - The area as a reserve

At this hearing I will touch only lightly on the issue of the original source of funding (my first point in my February submission) which I interpreted as some form of setting aside for enjoyment by the community rather than being available for special interest groups, such as developers. This issue is not relevant to a Resource Management hearing. It could be completely bypassed by structuring the variation to ensure that roads used for access to a development are built by the developer on the developers land rather than take it out of general recreational use. The issue folds into my second theme.

Proposed new zoning divisions.

Natural Open Space

The use of the Natural Open Spaces description given by Rushmore in her Section 42A Report (03 November 2023) indicates "Natural Open Space Zone is dominated by areas where people predominantly undertake passive recreational activities or specialised active recreational activities which have a high degree of nature interaction. These areas do not generally have an 'open' character, and do not have a wide range of buildings or specialised equipment to support recreation use".

This is entirely acceptable, but the enabling of Site Specific Provisions for infrastructure immediately opens the possibility of a road, a road that was planned by Envelope for Guildford at 1.4 km long and 18m wide, (see the evidence of Mr Read) with planning sufficiently advanced to make an application to the IAF. Mr Read continues in his Evidence, (sections 5.8) to note that other access routes to SGA are possible, but consideration of these options is deferred. In this way the future of the spur is constrained for the possible benefit of a few at a cost to the many. And as well as this lack of definition, what Site Specific Provisions are for, and where they are to be placed is not controlled in any way, and on the basis that "what is not

forbidden is up for grabs", the prospects are bleak. This prospect is made even more bleak the evidence of Foy, for Guildford, who states . "Having a workable corridor is important to enable future road access and the provision of infrastructure to the SGA"., and that submission continues on to assert that the SGA will be an important part of a growth strategy. It seems that this discussion will drag on for some time until the open space is modified in the Kiln Street area to provide access to a development in a neighbouring area.

The SNA, its definition, measurement, and applicability.

The determination of the extent of the Significant Natural Area provides some real difficulties. Dr Keesing has made transects in the area slated for zoning as SNA. He used an established definition of this as his test, and although I have not walked the area myself, I accept his statement that on his sightings the flora does not meet the test he applied. This really should not be especially surprising given that the area has only been regenerating for a few tens of years. At the Reynolds Bach Drive end of the Railway corridor we have found more plants than recorded by Dr Keesing in the proposed SNA, and he covers this in his section 7 However, at Silver Stream Railway we have a photo of a train crossing the earlier bridge (Bridge2) over the Hutt River in the early 1920's, showing the hillside on the Western side of the river almost completely cleared in the ridges but largely uncleared in the gulleys. Today, in the few places easily accessible, the vegetation is now much more complex. If we wait and in general avoid as much further degradation as possible, the vegetation becomes more complex. At the moment we are hopeful, but this relies on long times and sympathetic management.

I am surprised that the only indigenous fauna Dr Keesing noticed noted were fantail and grey warbler. It must have been a bad day as somewhat further toward Reynolds Bach Drive we frequently see Kotare, Pipiwharau, Pukeko, and Australasian harrier, (last seen trying to reduce the Mallard duck population. We also hear Ruru most of the nights we are there. Somewhat to the north east of our marshalling yards, there is a stream that flows all year round, and in this stream we can , without much difficulty find koura. No doubt there is something smaller in the stream that they eat.

So, although the proposed SNA does not meet the requirements selected, this then falls to a matter of labelling, and a will to protect our future. In the future, (and at the rate land is being used up this is the near future), there will be little easily accessible space to remind our children why New Zealand used to, but no longer does, have an image of clean or green, unless one is thinking of the hedge plantings of griselinia around postage stamp lawns.

More than anything I would like as large lumps as possible to be preserved in a contiguous block, and for this to be done without the vexatious process of fighting groups who marshal cash and the resources that buys as part of their business process, while those of the general public who are the likely losers struggle with unfamiliar processes, and lack the specialist knowledge required to mount a defense of the environment they are slowly loosing.