



Boffa Miskell

GUILDFORD TIMBER LAND SWAP

Land Swap Discussion Document
Prepared for Guildford Timber Company Limited

21 OCTOBER 2015

Document Quality Assurance

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Prepared by:	Sarah Edwards Senior Planner Boffa Miskell Ltd	
Reviewed by:	Rhys Girvan Principal Landscape Planner Boffa Miskell Ltd	
Reviewed by:	Robert Schofield Partner Senior Environmental Planner Boffa Miskell Ltd	
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1.0 The next legacy

The Upper Hutt City Council's urban growth and resource management objectives could be significantly advanced through the integrated residential, open space and recreational development of the ridge southwest of Silverstream and Pinehaven.

This discussion document outlines how that could be achieved through a vision proposed by the Guildford Timber Company. The vision involves developing suitable areas of the ridge in residential hamlets designed to fit sensitively alongside large areas of proposed public reserve land that would be managed to enhance natural, heritage and recreational values.

The Guildford Timber Company owns much of the land on the ridge and proposes working in partnership with the council to realise the vision. Key to the Guildford proposal would be an exchange of land with the council to enable road access to be developed from Silverstream. In this document, the vision and proposed land swaps are outlined, together with a discussion of the many benefits that would potentially flow to the local community, Upper Hutt city and the region.

2.0 Guildford Timber: a local business

The Guildford Timber Company is a family-run forestry business, long associated with Upper Hutt and, in particular, with Pinehaven.

The company first began tree planting in the Pinehaven area in 1928, using mostly pine trees. From the beginning, it had a strong environmental and sustainable management ethic. Beech, kamahi and other native species were planted, as well as pines, and native bush was preserved in the gullies for fire breaks. The Guildford Timber Company still continues the tradition of planting native trees to enrich the forest.

As Pinehaven (named after the plantations) gradually grew, land from the Guildford estate was sold for subdivisions and the capital put back into the forest area, which is now known as the 'Guildford Block'. Consequently, the Guildford Timber Company has a long-standing and valued relationship with the local community including helping with the start up of the Pinehaven and Blue Mountains Progressive Associations by providing land and resources.

Whilst the block continues to offer some ongoing forestry prospects, Guildford Timber has, in more recent times, had to consider diversifying its land interests in response to changing economic and social conditions. The Guildford Timber Company recognise that the local community feels a deep sense of stewardship over Pinehaven's green spaces and natural character including Guildford Timber Company land: an appreciation that the family shares.

As part of its vision for the future, the Guildford Timber Company wants to enhance and restore the area's natural spaces, building on the long Guildford history of consistent land management and strong community ties.

3.0 The ridge

The Guildford ridge extends from the Hutt valley floor near Silverstream up to the Blue Mountains and defines the southwest side of the Silverstream and Pinehaven communities. The steep eastern slopes are visually prominent within the Silverstream / Pinehaven valley, providing a sense of enclosure and a valued green backdrop. Parts of the Guildford land is already used informally by locals for walking and mountain biking.

At a wider scale, the ridge is also prominent. It juts into the Hutt River valley between Pinehaven and Stokes Valley, forming a 'threshold' between Upper and Lower Hutt and a physical link from the valley floor to the summit of the ridge that runs down the entire eastern side of the Hutt valley.

3.1 Land ownership

At the time when the Guildford Timber Company first began purchasing land in the area in the 1920s, it was largely made up of grass and scrubland thought to have been cleared by early settlers. Nowadays, the Guildford Block comprises 300+ hectares on the ridge, including substantial areas of the steep eastern slopes and the more rolling ridgetop land up to the summit of the Blue Mountains but excluding the lowermost spur at the Silverstream end. Pines cover most of the block, although native bush, including kamahi forest, is regenerating through the older parts of the plantation. Pockets of remnant native beech and podocarps also occur.

At the lower end of the ridge, Silverstream Spur, which is owned by the Upper Hutt City Council, is a prominent local feature, visible in parts of Silverstream and from the nearby historic Silver Stream Railway Museum and Hutt River corridor. Like the surrounding hills, historically the spur was cleared of its original vegetation and used as farmland. The grassland has since been replaced with mainly pine forest and some regenerating native vegetation, especially on the steep side slopes and in the gullies¹.



Aerial photograph showing the land prior to forestry

1. Upper Hutt City Council Silverstream Spur Ecological Values Assessment 2015



4.0 The vision in brief

In developing its proposal, the Guildford Timber Company has stepped back to consider the wider context, taking into account the entire ridge landform (including the council-owned Silverstream Spur), its strategic location in the Hutt valley and the long-term sustainability of any land use changes that might occur.

Bearing these considerations in mind, the company is proposing to set aside the steeper, highly visible slopes on the sides of the valley as potential open space and deliver a new destination park in recognition of the high community values attributed to this area. This outcome would protect important natural values and deliver an important recreation hub within Upper Hutt and the Hutt Valley. Figure 1 shows this in the wider context.

To ensure that the forested hill backdrop, much loved by the Pinehaven community would be retained, residential housing would be developed on parts of the ridge beyond the forested slopes. A series of discrete although interconnected settlements would nestle into the landform in such a way as to minimise disturbance to the land and the existing forested character and deliver an integral part of Upper Hutt's Urban Growth Strategy.

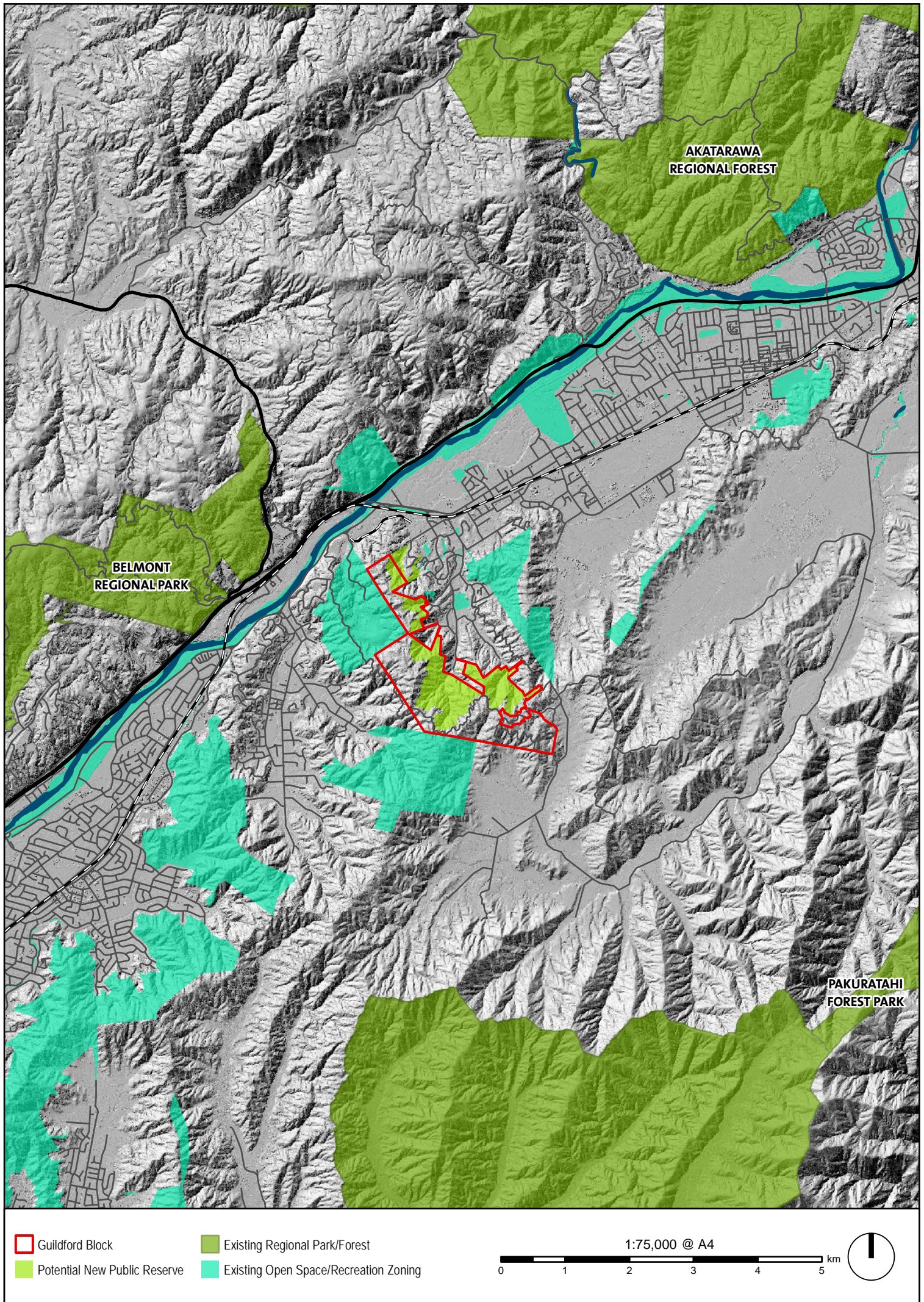


FIGURE 1

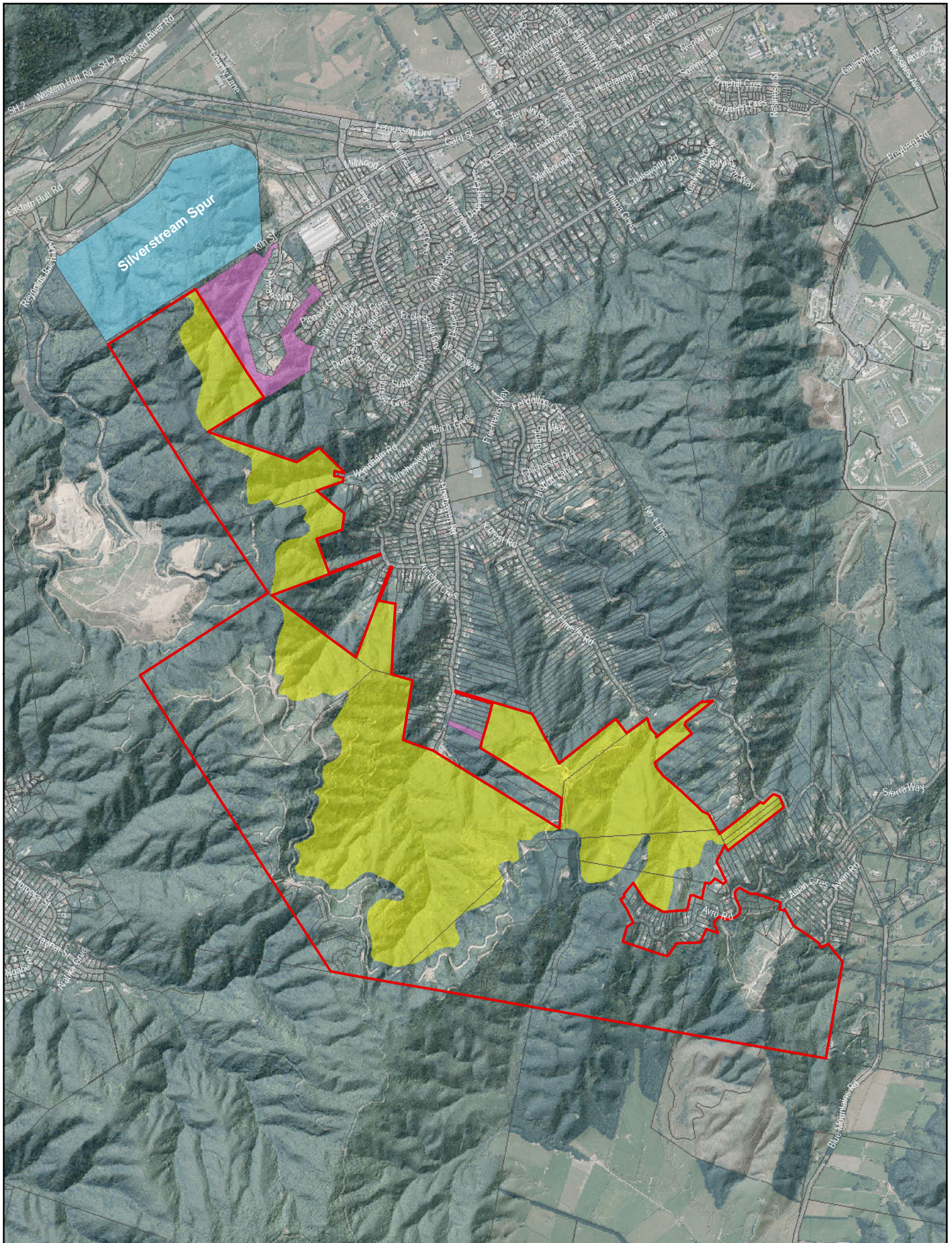
5.0 The proposed land swap

Enabling road access onto the ridge from the valley floor will be the keystone to achieving the proposed vision.

The council-owned Silverstream Spur is the most suitable location to develop a road link from the valley, as the contours allow for a route that would sidle up the south side of the spur to join the rolling ridgetop land in the Guildford Block.

It is therefore proposed that all or part of the 35-hectare Silverstream Spur be transferred to the Guildford Timber Company and, in return, 132 hectares of the Guildford Block, on the slopes south and east of Pinehaven, would be transferred to the Upper Hutt City Council. Figure 2 shows the areas of proposed land swap.

In proposing this land swap, the Guildford Timber Company seeks to work in partnership with the council and other stakeholders to achieve a range of mutually beneficial outcomes for the company, the council and the Upper Hutt community. This could include the establishment of a community trust which could assist in the design and development of the park for environmental and heritage conservation, public recreation and enjoyment. The trust could take on partnership role made up from representatives from the community, iwi, the Guildford families, the Council and other stakeholders.



Land Swap Areas

- Currently owned by Upper Hutt City Council (35 ha)
- Currently owned by Guildford Timber Company (132 ha)

Guildford Block

Other Upper Hutt City Council Land

1:20,000 @ A4

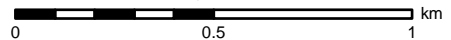


FIGURE 2

POTENTIAL LAND SWAP AREAS

6.0 The vision: benefits and opportunities

Numerous community benefits and opportunities would flow from the land swap. These are outlined in this section.

6.1 Landscape character

Upper Hutt residents identify the surrounding hills of the district as a key feature of the city's character. The city's southern hills, extending from Pinehaven and the Blue Mountains north to Kingsley Heights and Mount Marua, form an important visual backdrop to the central city and its suburban surrounds.

Given the importance of the hill backdrop, the Guildford Timber Company has carefully considered how its vision for a forested residential lifestyle development could fit within the existing landscape character of this wider setting and ensure that the green visual backdrop is retained in important views of the ridge and its hillsides. Guildford Timber's vision is for any future residential housing to be developed on the areas that are largely unseen from the valley floor below. As Figures 3 and 4 show, the ridgetop land above the proposed open space is largely screened from sight in views from the valley below.

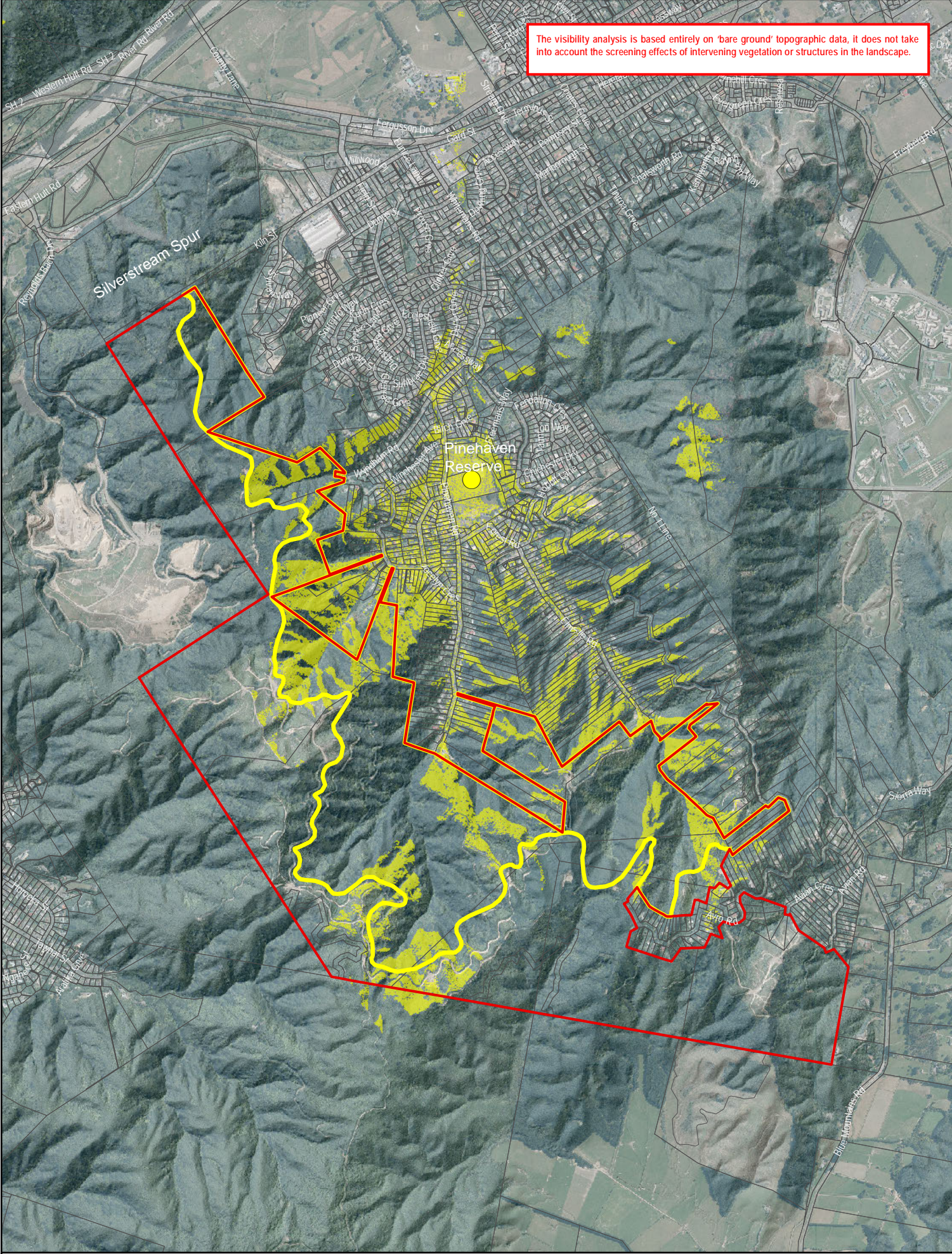
The hillsides facing the Pinehaven valley are the most visible areas, when viewed from Pinehaven Reserve, and these are the areas proposed for transfer to the Upper Hutt City Council. The proposed land swap offers the opportunity to protect, in perpetuity, the open space on these eastern slopes and the sense of place they give to the Pinehaven community. The land swap would be a means of formalising, through public ownership, this visual backdrop as a 'green belt' for residents to enjoy as both a landscape feature and as a recreational area (see 6.4 below).

The steep slopes around the Silverstream Spur are also an important landscape feature because, although of comparatively low elevation, they provide a similar green backdrop in the immediate locality of the Silver Stream Railway Museum, the Eastern Hutt Road and the rail and road bridges crossing the Hutt River. These slopes would also be retained in open space on which regeneration of native bush would be encouraged – for both visual amenity and to bring the ecological corridor described in section 6.3 as close as possible to the Hutt River corridor and western escarpment. This would effectively extend the destination park concept into the heart of the Hutt Valley.



Figure 3: Potential Open Space (Yellow) Visible from Pinehaven Reserve - a future green belt protected

The visibility analysis is based entirely on 'bare ground' topographic data, it does not take into account the screening effects of intervening vegetation or structures in the landscape.



- Potential Open Space
- Viewpoint - Pinehaven Reserve
- Guildford Block
- Visible from Viewpoint

1:20,000 @ A4

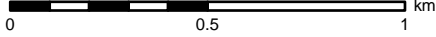


FIGURE 4 **VISIBILITY ANALYSIS**

6.2 Catchment management

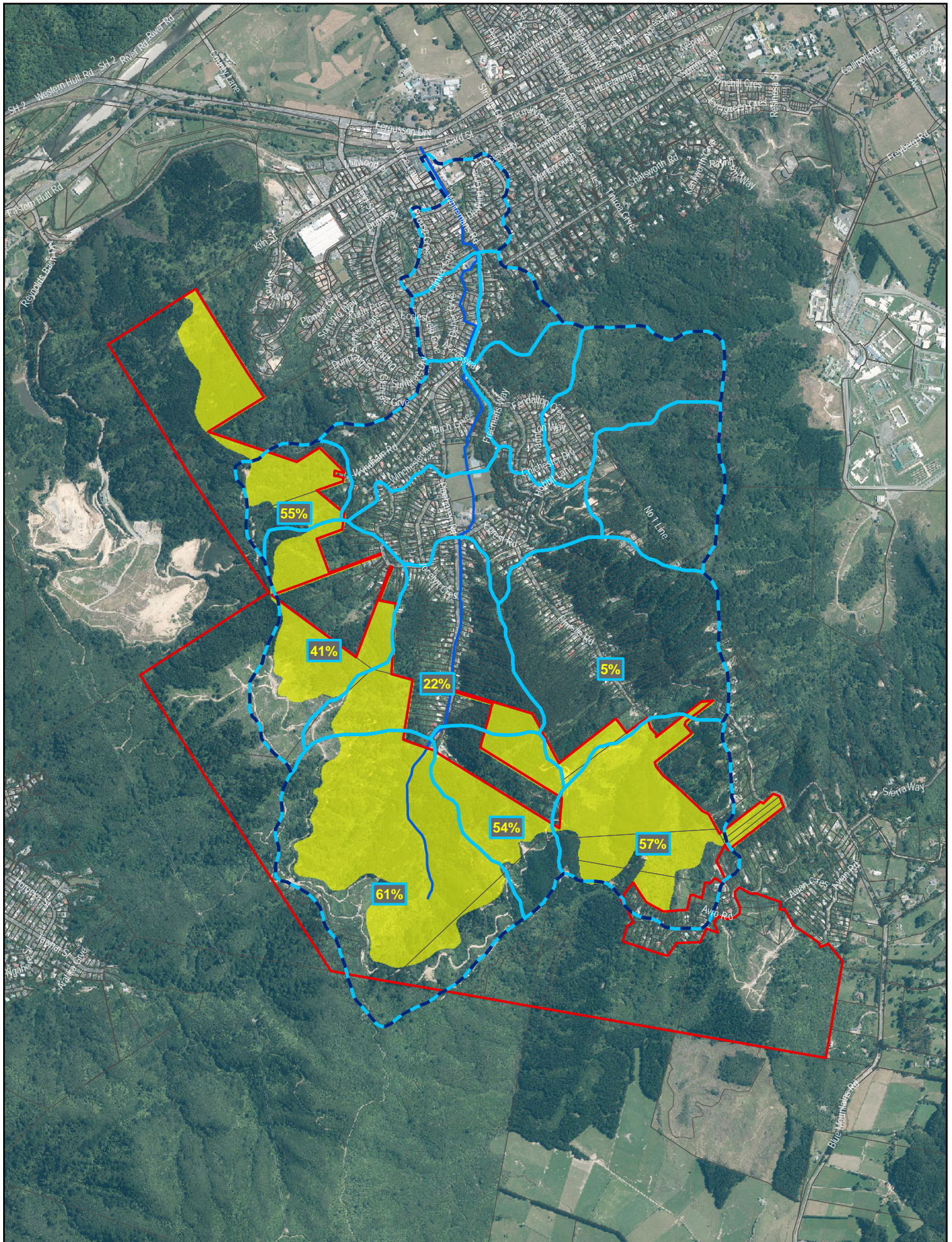
The land swap would also place extensive areas of steep land in the Pinehaven Stream catchment under Upper Hutt City Council control, with significant catchment management benefits.

Flooding has been a problem during extreme events within the urbanised areas on the valley floor in Pinehaven and Silverstream, due in large part to the rapid runoff from the steep hillsides within the relatively small catchment. Stable forest cover helps to slow runoff by filtering and absorbing rainfall, and is especially effective on steep slopes.

Therefore, the land swap offers a strategic opportunity for the council to proactively protect and enhance the existing forest cover on a large proportion of the steep land in the catchment and avoid the runoff and sedimentation issues that can arise from forest harvest. This opportunity is consistent with the draft Pinehaven Flood Management Plan², in which stormwater controls and catchment management plans have been introduced to help manage the risk from major rainfall events in the area.

Figure 5 shows the relationship between the land that would be transferred to the council and the streams in catchment.

2. Greater Wellington Regional Council 2015



□ Guildford Block

□ Subcatchment

X%

■ Potential Open Space

□ Pinehaven Stream Catchment

Percentage of potential new reserve area within subcatchment

— Pinehaven Stream

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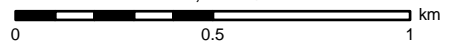


FIGURE 5

6.3 Natural and heritage values

One of the most exciting prospects of the land swap would be the opportunity to enhance ecological and biodiversity values by creating an extensive area of public reserve. The Guildford ridge is strategically located at a pinch point in the Hutt valley where the ridge, at Silverstream Spur, extends close to the Hutt River corridor and the Silverstream Scenic Reserve on the escarpment over the river. This proximity gives the ridge importance as an ecological corridor, connecting natural areas on the east and west sides of the Hutt valley.

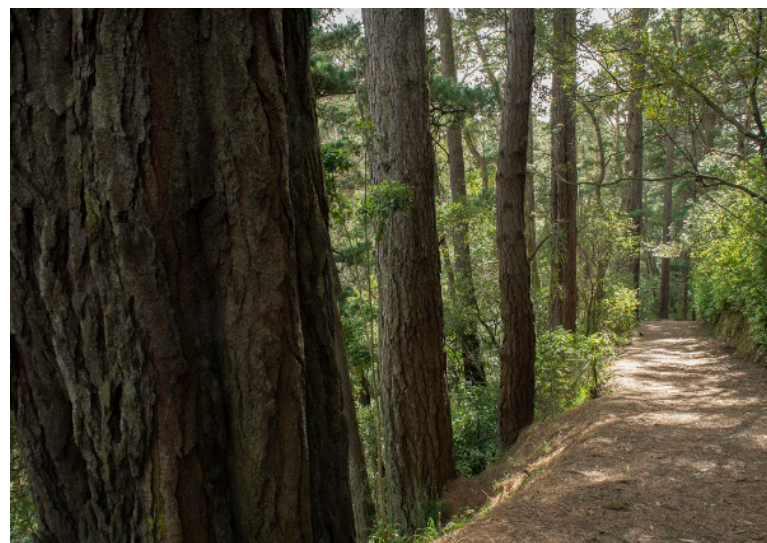
Figure 6 shows the vegetation of ecological value that is already present on the land proposed for transfer to the council. On the hillsides among the pine trees, there are areas of kamahi forest and pockets of remnant beech, especially along Avro Road, and the vegetation provides wildlife habitat as well the water and soil conservation benefits discussed in 6.2 above. Public ownership would provide scope for permanent protection of the fauna and flora present, together with restoration of ecological values that would see the local ecosystems more healthy and resilient to change. A forest management programme could be implemented to slowly replace pine trees with native forest and enhance biodiversity.

The Guildford Timber Company is also mindful of the importance the community places on protecting and restoring Upper Hutt's biodiversity and open spaces. The housing and road development on the ridge would be carried out to complement and interweave with the natural values of the public reserve area, whilst also providing opportunities for local residents to enjoy and become involved in protecting natural values. For instance, watercourses and slopes greater than 20 degrees would be mainly managed as open space with vegetation cover to conserve water and soil values.

The story of the Guildford plantations is a fascinating piece of local history that is bound in with the natural values of the ridge. The world-famous yachtsman, Sir Francis Chichester, was a driving force behind the original forest plantings together with Mr G.D.M Goodwin. Furthermore, the Guildford history of planting native as well as exotic trees was an unusual initiative which has left an enduring legacy in some of the now well-established areas of kamahi and other regenerating forest. There is opportunity to interweave this story into information about the natural values of the potential reserve land and the community's sense of the interaction of people and place.



Kamahi Regeneration



Recreation Trail

Haakon Carruthers

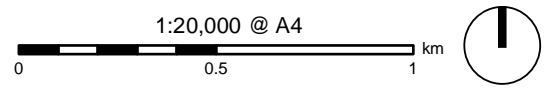
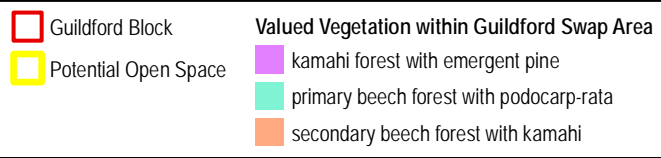
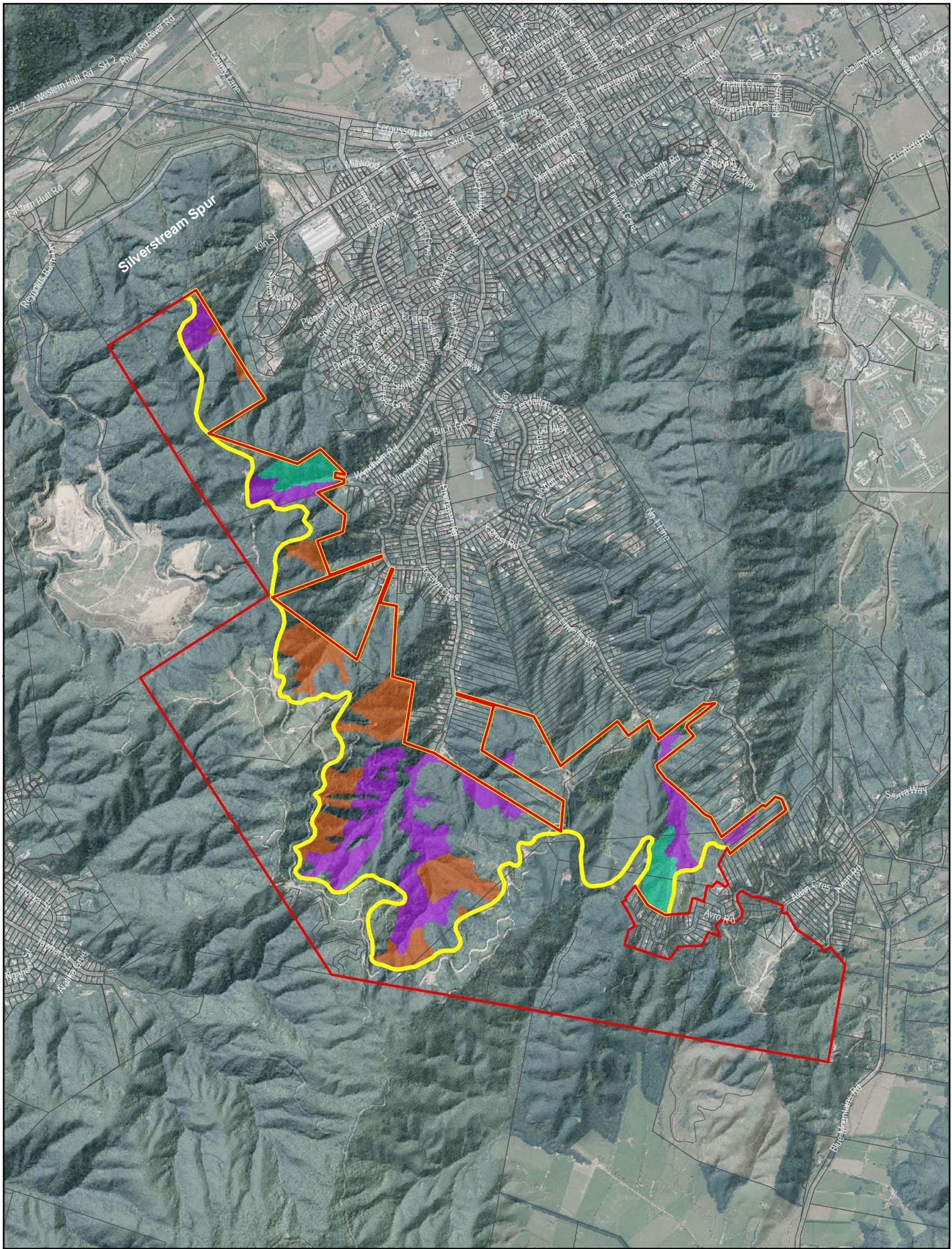


FIGURE 6

6.4 Outdoor recreation hub

The Guildford ridge is uniquely placed within the Hutt valley to become an outdoor recreation hub that connects the increasing range of walking, cycling, mountain biking and running routes that are putting the Hutt valley on the map as a recreational heaven.

The location is highly strategic, being central in the Hutt valley at the pinch point where the valley narrows and the ridge comes close to the Hutt River and the hills on the western side of the valley. The location means that the proposed public reserve could be a hub where its own tracks and trails would provide connections from the ridge between:

- the Hutt River trail;
- the summit tracks along the eastern hills of Lower Hutt, eventually connecting to the Wainuiomata Trail Project;
- the cycling opportunities in Whitemans Valley and, beyond, to the Tunnel Gully, Mt Climie challenge and Rimutaka Incline routes;
- connections via the Hutt River trail to trails and tracks on the western side of the river, including the Silverstream Scenic Reserve, the Moonshine and Cannon Point areas, and more remote areas in the Akatarawa and Whakatikei hill country.

These connections would significantly extend the recreational choices in the Hutt valley area, enabling a wider range of circular and interconnected routes to be enjoyed. For instance, mountain bikers could ride from the Wainuiomata saddle along the eastern hills ridge to the Blue Mountains, come down the Guildford ridge and then return via the Hutt River Trail and back up the Wainuiomata Hill.

At a more local level, access to parks and open space is known to improve people's physical and psychological health, and strengthen communities by providing scope for outdoor activities and enjoyment. The proposed outdoor recreation hub would also enable the Upper Hutt City Council to extend its existing network of recreational spaces and develop a range of access points and loop tracks for local residents in Silverstream, Pinehaven and the Blue Mountains to explore

and enjoy. A key feature will be the ability to experience the ecological corridor (described in 6.3) in close proximity to the urban environments, with potential to bring together recreation, education and community restoration involvement.

These are just a few of the many possibilities for new leisure experiences that the public reserve area could accommodate. The hub concept could be enhanced by developing onsite attractions such as adventure and outdoor skills courses, artificial climbing rocks as well as a headquarters with public amenities, information and advice about the outdoor recreation opportunities offering in the area.

Outdoor recreation is hugely popular and a growing sector of economic activity, as evidenced by the success of the award winning purpose-built Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park on the southern edge of Wellington city, which attracts over 80,000 visits a year; 30% of which are walkers and runners³. Similarly, Rotorua's Whakarewarewa Redwood Forest attracts both domestic and international visitors to its 130 km of mountain biking, forest walking, horse riding and, even, dog walking tracks⁴.

The Guildford Timber Company thinks an outdoor adventure hub would be an asset with potential to attract thousands of visitors a year and add significantly to the local and regional economy. It is expected that such an asset would enhance and support local employment and business whilst also providing the community with the benefit of enhanced recreational opportunities on its doorstep. The company anticipates that the public reserve/outdoor hub on the land transferred to the Upper Hutt City Council would be run by the council but with opportunities to also involve co-management partnership for the benefit, education and enjoyment of all members of our community.

Figure 7 shows the strategic position of the ridge in terms of connections of proposed new roading and additional access to other outdoor recreational opportunities.

3. <http://makarapeak.org/About/>

4. <http://redwoods.co.nz/>

6.5 A residential community with a difference

Residential development within an existing forested environment is uncommon in the Wellington region. The low-impact clustered housing, within mature pine and regenerating native forest, that is envisaged, would therefore offer a distinctive and attractive option within the housing market. The concept of fitting the housing into the existing landscape will attract homeowners seeking tranquil 'lifestyle' living close to the amenities of Upper Hutt. It will also involve new homes being purpose-designed to fit individual sites and finished in high quality natural materials that will blend into the setting.

While the concept will attract those seeking alternatives to conventional suburban living, the clustering of dwellings will nevertheless encourage social interaction between neighbours, further enhanced by walkways, cycleways and bridle paths that will connect and foster a sense of community between all the hamlets along the ridge. This approach will mean confining the development mainly to the rolling ridgetop, which is the least visible from the valley areas below.

The main land development involved would be:

- a new road that would run up the ridgetop from Kiln Street, in Silverstream, to Avro Road, in the Blue Mountains;
- a medium density village neighbourhood situated towards the northern lower end of the ridge;
- small hamlets and clusters on the central part of the ridgetop;
- small hamlets and clusters towards the higher southern end of the ridge near Avril and Avian Roads.

This would offer appealing options to home owners with the added bonus of easy access to nearby suburbs, CBD and regional connections.



Shona McCahon

Living areas integrated within natural settings



Shona McCahon

Roading layout framed by vegetation



Shona McCahon

Houses nestled below vegetation

6.6 Access and connections

The new road illustrated in Figure 7, which would run from Kiln Street to Avro Road, would be necessary for the proposed Guildford development but would also usefully provide an alternative link from Silverstream to the Blue Mountains and beyond, to Whitemans Valley. Indeed, the Upper Hutt Urban Growth Strategy 2007 identified the need for a new road to provide this alternative link. The new road has the potential to improve access to public transport, schools and town centre facilities by easing traffic pressure on the existing Blue Mountains Road and providing a second option in the event of road closure from events such as slips.

Residential development would also open up opportunities for improved infrastructure to be brought in to the established rural lifestyle development along Avro Road. Currently, access to this area is via a winding rural road network through steep terrain. There would be flow-on benefits from upgrading and improving roading infrastructure in the area, whilst nevertheless ensuring that the rural lifestyle character was retained and any roading improvements were sympathetic to the underlying topography.

7.0 A strategic future

Wellington region's population is growing, with increasing demand for different housing choices and options. The Upper Hutt City Council is well placed to provide a wide range of housing and lifestyle options by enabling well-sited and well-designed housing opportunities that will attract people to its attractive valley setting and its active and involved community.

The council's Urban Growth Strategy recognises, however, that there is insufficient capacity for residential growth under the existing zoning and district plan provisions. It is essential to identify new areas for residential growth. The Guildford land swap proposal could help address this issue and ignite a wave of new residential growth in Upper Hutt.

The vision outlined in this discussion document reflects a concept earlier articulated in the Upper Hutt City Council Urban Growth Strategy 2007, in which the Guildford ridge area was identified as a high priority for possible greenfield development. In the same year, the Framework Document for Guildford was also prepared and put to the community for consultation but subsequent adverse economic conditions prevented progress. Guildford Timber remains motivated, however, to delivering a sustainable residential development that offers a high degree of ecological and social integrity.

The Guildford Timber Company sees the city council's Urban Growth Strategy Review as an excellent opportunity to re-engage on its vision and, thereby, help progress the council's strategic growth aims. The Guildford proposal would involve:

- land strategically located to provide for anticipated growth
- a high quality residential design
- environmentally sustainable principles
- a distinctive type and form of urban environment in keeping with the character of Upper Hutt

Together these qualities would help to promote the sustainable growth and positive perception of Upper Hutt as a whole. The Guildford Timber Company is looking to the future in alignment with the aspirations of the Upper Hutt community. The company believes that these opportunities will only be achieved by working towards a shared vision in partnership with the community, iwi, local government and other stakeholders.

Put simply; now is the ideal time to proactively shape the future of the Upper Hutt housing market.



About Boffa Miskell

Boffa Miskell is a 100% employee owned planning and design consultancy established in 1972 in Christchurch. We bring together over 140 professional staff with expertise in planning, ecology, urban design, cultural advisory, landscape architecture, sustainability and digital environment services. Over the past four decades we have built a reputation for innovation and excellence in integrated development and design. During this time we have been associated with a significant number of projects that have led changes in shaping New Zealand's landscape.

www.boffamiskell.co.nz

auckland

t: +64 9 358 2526
f: +64 9 359 5300

tauranga

t: +64 7 571 5511
f: +64 7 571 3333

wellington

t: +64 4 385 9315
f: +64 4 384 3089

christchurch

t: +64 3 366 8891
f: +64 3 365 7539

shanghai

t: +86 21 6426 9886
f: +86 21 6426 9890