

Unitary Plan Issues Paper – Public Open Space and Recreation

Context

This issue paper forms part of the Heritage, Cultural & Community Issues Paper, one of six main issue papers that will assist in guiding the development of Auckland's Unitary Plan. An issue in the context of this paper is either an opportunity or a problem. Opportunities and problems must be well defined to enable objectives, policies and methods to be able to address the problem. Opportunities and problems that are defined and measurable in their extent through indicator monitoring are sought where possible. All opportunities and problems must be within scope of the purpose and functions of the Resource Management Act. Issues are prioritised within this paper as Council does not have endless capacity to address all issues facing Auckland – emphasis must be given to those issues that are causing the greatest impediment to Council meeting its statutory obligations and achieving its strategic outcomes as defined within the Auckland Plan. Many issues are however interrelated.

Either broad approaches or options are identified to enable the relevant issues to be addressed. This paper identifies broad approaches where further investigations are needed to be undertaken in order to clearly identify options in a section 32 sense. Options are clarified to the point of being able to be evaluated and recommendations made on preferred options to then set up drafting of objectives, policies and methods

Legislative Requirements

Resource Management Act 1991 (financial contributions for acquisition and development of public open space, esplanade reserves);

Reserves Act 1977 (classification of reserves, acquisition & use of reserves, reserve management plans);

Public Works Act 1981 (acquisition of land for public open space);

Historic Places Act 1993 (protection of archaeological sites);

Conservation Act 1987 (covers DOC owned land);

Local Government Act 1974 (provides for the creation of esplanade reserves abutting the sea, rivers or lakes on stopping of roads)

Local Government 2002 (provides for the management of and protection from disposal for Regional Parks, development contributions for acquisition and development of open space, restrictions on disposal of parks, community outcomes, etc)

Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009

Local Government (Auckland Transition Provisions) Act 2010

New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement 2010;

Waitakere Ranges Heritage Area Act 2008;

Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act;

Auckland Domain Act 1987

Significant Issues

Out of scope

Marinas and marine related activities (Rural & Coastal workstream)
Surface of marine water (Rural and Coastal workstream)
Co-governance e.g Volcanic Cones (Treaty of Waitangi sub-workstream)
Streets (Infrastructure workstream)

Summary of Key Issues

1. Acquisition of additional public open space and the funding of it;
2. Accessibility of public open space;
3. The different functions that public open space must serve;
4. The quality of the public open space resource and the amenity values of adjacent areas
5. The relationship between Tangata Whenua and public open space
6. Public access to the coast, lakes & rivers (Esplanade reserves and strips)
7. Public open space network/linkages (note: closely linked to issue 6)
8. The management of public open space (Parks & Reserves Categories/Zones/Outcome Areas/Environments, the relationship between the Unitary Plan and Reserve Management Plans) (note: closely linked to issues 3 & 4)
9. The management of major recreational facilities (includes sports stadia and commercial recreation/entertainment facilities)
10. The management of private open space e.g golf courses
11. Temporary recreational events/activities

Introduction

Open space includes 'green spaces' such as parks and reserves, sportsfields, cemeteries and water body margins which are used for social, recreation and amenity purposes and for the protection of landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage; the 'blue spaces' such as the region's waterways and harbours; the 'grey spaces' such as civic squares, streetscapes and transport corridors; and includes open vistas and views.¹

Public open space refers to land *above* Mean High Water Springs which is relatively free of buildings and/or surface infrastructure and is administered and owned by either a central, regional or local government agency for the purpose of providing:

- public access to open land, foreshore, rivers and streams, and areas of heritage significance and/or;
- a stock of land including coastal land for the purposes of heritage protection, the protection of biodiversity, landscape enhancement, recreation opportunity, education, and environmental protection.²

The private sector may also play a role in providing open space, for example where private open space is seen to contribute to amenity values, stormwater management, and recreation opportunities (such as golf courses). Private open space can therefore be seen as complementary, and in some cases may be used as a substitute for public open space where partnership arrangements and financial incentives can be negotiated to ensure public access is secured (for example churches, education facilities).

The benefits of public open space are comprehensively described in the diagram below:

¹ Auckland Regional Council. Regional Growth Forum. Auckland Open Space Strategy, 2005, P. 4.

² Manukau Operative District Plan, 2002, Chapter 15 – Public Open Space, P.3



Source: Auckland Regional Open Space Strategy, 2005

The coastal marine area and roads are important “public open spaces” but are discussed under other workstreams/issues papers.

Issue – The acquisition of additional public open space and the funding of it

As Auckland’s population grows and becomes more diverse, and urban development intensifies, one of the aspects of the open space network that needs to be reviewed is the quantity. Acquisition of additional quality open space should be based on sound research including an audit of the current asset, environmental analysis and community needs assessment.

Funding the acquisition, development, operation and maintenance of a growing open space network and allocating costs in a fair, equitable and affordable manner.

Threats to future open space provision from increasing land values (making it increasingly difficult and costly to acquire open space). There are also limited opportunities available within existing urban areas to acquire additional open space and recreation land.

Explanation

The draft Auckland Plan identifies the single greatest issue for open space in the Auckland region as population growth and the corresponding higher household densities within new green-field and inner city areas this brings. This typically results in less private space available to residents, increasing the importance of the provision of quality public open space (parks, pedestrian friendly streets and green spaces with large trees) to make high density living acceptable to Auckland residents (particularly those who have a cultural expectation to have attractive abundant green space).³ There is also a need for flexibility to be able to respond to changing ethnic diversity and recreational needs.

³ Working Draft of Auckland Plan – July, 2011

It is critical that the public open space requirements in general and the needs of people and communities are identified which can then be partially implemented through subdivision and development. While the provision of public open space is generally an integral part of any subdivision or development design, in some situations a site may be subject to such constraints or be of such a size that the adequate provision on-site of public open space is precluded. In these circumstances, the environmental effects caused by development or subdivision include:

- (a) additional stress and demand on the region's natural resources;
- (b) changing amenity values such as the amount of space around buildings, streetscape appearance, the "attractiveness" and liveability of areas which includes social, economic, and cultural conditions in the region;
- (c) the effects of development on people's health and well being;
- (d) adverse effects on heritage resources.⁴

There is also an opportunity to address deficiencies/opportunities in the existing open space network.

Public open space may also be identified and acquired through the designation process (although it is often acquired before it is designated e.g recent ARC regional park purchases), easements and covenants and there are examples of land being gifted e.g. Cornwall Park.

Private open space land may be protected and partnerships formed to enable public access.

There are a number of land parcels zoned for public open space that offer no or little public benefit. These are often the result of subdivision and may be located in remote areas and sometimes have no public access. Rationalisation is needed which would include:

- i) identifying them
- ii) assessment
- iii) disposing of them and using the funds for other priorities (e.g. acquisition of public open space in locations where there will be greater public benefit)

The Auckland Council's Community and Cultural Policy team is currently in the process of developing an overarching open space framework which will guide the development of a suite of supporting policies, such as parks and reserves levels of provision and acquisition and divestment guidelines.

Public open space has historically been funded primarily by financial contributions (through the Resource Management Act) and development contributions (through the Local Government Act) with the costs of public open space acquired for city-wide benefits being offset by some use of rates revenue.

The former Auckland TLA's had open space acquisition strategies which identified land for acquisition based on research and set criteria including public needs, sport/recreation trends, how effectively the existing public open space network (and associated buildings and structures) is being managed for use, environmental protection needs and demographic changes. These strategies also recognised that there are other public and private open space providers who contribute to offsetting the effects of development. Designations for proposed public open space were used to indicate the Council's intention to acquire particular sites.

There are also funding challenges regarding adding to and maintaining the existing open space network. For example, increasing sportsfield performance to enable greater use and reducing the number of field closures due to wet weather. Historically, some Council's have been reluctant in acquiring some public open space land because of the difficulty of funding its maintenance. Acquiring public open space for ecological reasons has also proved difficult as Development Contributions and Financial Contribution policies often don't cover this very well.

⁴ Manukau Operative District Plan, 2002, Chapter 15 – Public Open Space, P.9

Increasing land values make it more expensive to purchase open space in established areas.

Broad Approaches

Regulatory

- Reserve contribution requirements
- Designation
- Structure Plans (to prevent ad hoc small scale development that results in poor open space and walk/cycle way connectivity. Requiring structure plans enables areas to be comprehensively planned)

Non Regulatory

- Open Space Framework
- Parks and reserves levels of provision
- Land acquisition, easements, covenants
- Public – Private and Public – Public partnerships (facility partnerships) and Council working with private developers
- Parks & reserves acquisition/divestment policy
- Rates
- Loans
- Leases, licenses (including event related income)

Issue – Accessibility of public open space

The accessibility of open space and associated facilities, including increasing the accessibility to the wider regional open space network.

Explanation

The quality, amount and distribution of public open space across the region affects the level of environmental quality, community development and amenity that residents, workers, and visitors to the region will experience. The accessibility of open space and associated facilities is important in determining the level of use and who the users will be. For some forms of recreation, travel is an accepted part of the experience (accessibility by car or public transport) , but for others, their proximity to users (accessibility via recreational routes/strategic walking routes/cycleways) will be important in determining their level of use. 75% of Aucklanders find it easy or very easy to get to a local park or other green space in the city generally or local area. This compares with 77% nationally and 82% in Christchurch.⁵

The existing target standard (5.5ha/1000 population of local parkland and sports fields)⁶ provides a limited basis for assessing the provision of open space and informing decision making. The target focuses on the amount of open space, and does not address the diversity, distribution and quality of open space and needs of the community. Quantity targets can also be difficult and unrealistic due to the difficulty of acquiring open space in an urbanised area. The existing target does not differentiate between different types of open spaces.

Geography, including environmental features and landscape characteristics are determinants of accessibility and provision (for example, escarpments, ridgelines and water courses).

⁵ AC Neilson 2011, Quality of Life Survey, 2010, Eight Cities Report

⁶ Auckland Council's Long Term Plan Vol. 2: Vision, strategies & activities. 1 Nov 2010 – 30 June 2019, p.46

The Community and Cultural Policy team are investigating whether a needs assessment linked with the development of local area spatial plans is a preferred approach to identifying a community's open space needs⁷.

Cost is also a factor which influences accessibility. For example the Otago – Papatoetoe Draft Local Board Plan states that “community facilities such as libraries, community centres and swimming pools directly benefit children, and therefore barrier-free access to these facilities is particularly important in our area”.⁸

Access to facilities is an important aspect of participation in sport and recreation. Facility partnerships in New Zealand are increasingly being considered by Territorial Authorities, schools and community organisations as an efficient and cost-effective way to meet the varied sport and recreation needs of communities and school students.⁹

Broad Approaches

Regulatory

- Reserve contribution requirements
- Designations
- Unitary Plan open space zones and activity tables

Non Regulatory

- Parks & reserves acquisition/divestment policy
- Parks and reserves levels of provision
- Needs assessments linked with local area plans & precinct plans
- Open Space Network Plans and Local Area Plans

Issue – Different Functions of Public Open Space

Different types of open space are needed to meet the diverse needs and requirements of the community and visitors. Multi-functional open spaces provide greater flexibility if uses are compatible. There is a need for land for the establishment of facilities by public and community organizations and clubs. There is a lack of capacity in existing open space for cemeteries and sports fields.¹⁰ There is also a need for more parkland to protect and restore ecosystems.¹¹

Open Space can be used to provide structure to urban areas - from a regional through to a local scale.

There is increasing demand for the commercial recreation use of public open space.

Explanation

There is a need for a diversity of public open space types in order to satisfy the many different recreational, social, cultural, heritage, environmental, educational and community needs that people in this region and visitors have.

The demand for buildings associated with community purposes, education and recreation is increasing. These demands can conflict with the ability of public open space to serve other

⁷ Community and Cultural Policy team – Open Space Policy – Core Programme Review Group, 19 July 2011

⁸ Draft Otago – Papatoetoe Local Board Plan, Aug 2011

⁹ SPARC, Feb 2011, Territorial Authority/School Partnerships: A Guide

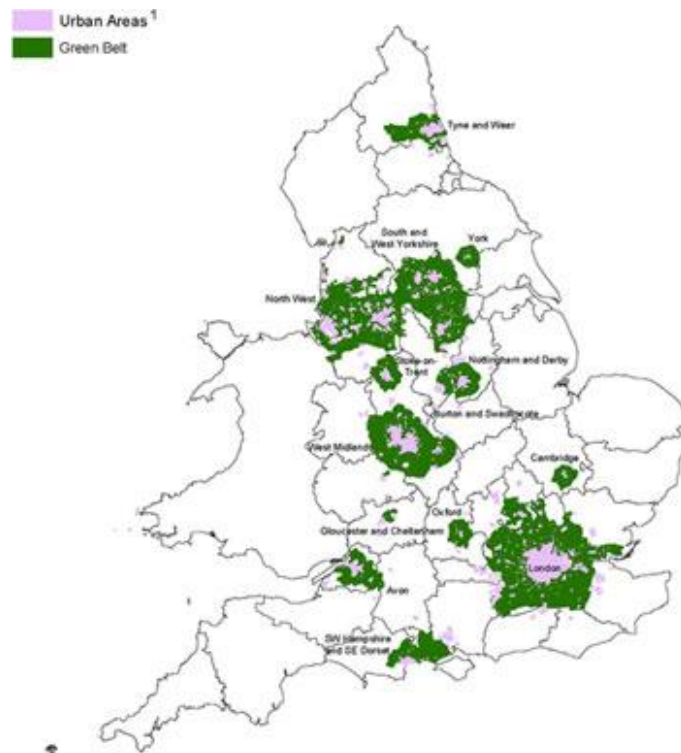
¹⁰ Working Draft of Auckland Plan – July, 2011

¹¹ Working Draft of Auckland Plan – July, 2011

functions which are dependent on retaining their open space character. Public open space taken for building purposes decreases the ability of that land to meet other functions, and decreases the overall ration of public open space available for outdoor recreation, amenity (visual relief and beautification), heritage and environmental protection. Section 7 of the RM Act requires the Council to have regard to a number of matters in the development, use and protection of natural and physical resources. One of these is the efficient use of resources. Buildings and structures on public open space are a physical resource. However, many buildings on public open space are under-utilised, poorly maintained and are developed for a single purpose. An alternative approach is the concept adopted for the development of the Papatoetoe Multi-sports facility. The \$12 million project provides a range of community sports grounds and facilities including: artificial hockey field, lighting towers, changing rooms, indoor cricket nets, lounge areas grounds reconfiguration and grass sports platform development. Delivered by a partnership between the Papatoetoe Sports and Community Charitable Trust and Manukau City Council, the new complex is aimed at increasing participation in recreation and sport as well as promoting a healthy and active lifestyle.

There is the opportunity for public open space to provide structure and form for the urban environment in particular, and to influence land use and built form. This can occur at a variety of scales. For example at the regional scale greenbelts can be used to provide a boundary to urban growth while at the local or neighbourhood scale high quality public open space can enhance the amenity values of high density housing. Also, an understanding of landscape character should be mapped and interpreted to provide guidance for site and surrounding environment ‘sense of place’, enabling a strengthening of local identity.

If a ‘greenbelt’ approach is to be implemented (this will depend on the Auckland Plan) international experience suggests that what can and can not occur on green belt ‘designated’ land needs to be clearly spelt out to preserve its integrity. Green belts are not necessarily the same as public open space as due to their scale they usually include private land.



Greenbelts around English cities

Greenbelts were supported by 145 submissions to the Auckland Plan. The reasons given for supporting greenbelts included:

- Prevention of sprawl

- Protection of landscape values and rural amenity
- Achievement of sustainability / green city outcomes
- Protection of rural economy and productive land
- Provision of recreational opportunities
- Improvements in air quality
- Positive for biodiversity¹²



Central Park – New York

There is increasing demand for commercial recreational activities on public open space in the form of concessionaires, clubrooms with cafes, restaurants, venue hire. Parks policy will guide what can/can not be approved.

Broad Approaches

Regulatory

- Unitary Plan open space zones and activity tables
- Reserve Management Plans/Iwi Management Plans
- Providing for medium and higher density housing in areas with high quality public open space
- Providing public open space where there is high density housing
- Landscape character/management unit overlays to guide/form development concepts of specific sites and the surrounding environment

Non Regulatory

- Parks and reserves categories
- Parks and reserves levels of provision
- Parks & reserves acquisition/divestment policy
- Parks and reserves design guidelines
- Land acquisition
- Identification of deficiencies in open space through a needs assessment linked with area plans & precinct plans

¹² Auckland Council. Submissions to the Auckland Plan Discussion Document, 2011

- Acquisition of land in strategic locations to protect landscape and landforms as well as providing buffering and green-belt effect (dependant upon the direction set by the Auckland Plan)

Issue – The Quality of the Open Space Resource and Amenity Values of Adjacent Areas

Activities (and the intensity and frequency of use) and development occurring on open space can affect the quality of the open space resource and availability and quality of recreational experiences. Increasing demands for the use of existing open space for example from urban intensification can result in conflicts between different open space activities and environmental degradation. The quality of public open space needs to be addressed.

Threats to existing and future open space quality include:

- Infrastructure provision and expansion, particularly transport, water supply, stormwater & telecommunications (loss of useable public open space);
- Competition for space between activities (competing demands for the use of open space, particularly sportsfields)
- Inappropriate commercial activities
- Lack of knowledge i.e. appropriate management and maintenance for e.g. indigenous vegetation, landform protection, cultural heritage features

If public open space is perceived as being unsafe, then people will not use it.

Activities & development on open space can adversely affect the amenity values of adjacent areas, particularly residential areas. Conversely, inappropriate development adjoining open space has the potential to compromise definition (the identification of what is public open space and private land), quality and user experience.

Erosion of coastal reserves.

Explanation

Examples within the region and nationally have shown a correlation between quality of an open space and its use.

Population growth and/or more intensive residential settlement patterns can adversely affect the quality of existing public open space through overuse, crowding, and conflicts of interests and environmental degradation. If the carrying capacity of the public open space network is exceeded the quality of existing public open space is reduced. All of this results in exclusion and a lack of space for active and passive sports or recreational activities, educational and social opportunities, amenity, landscape enhancement, and environmental protection. This can lead to compromised/reduced recreational opportunities, experiences and benefits.

If infrastructure is located on public open space it can impact upon the function and the use and enjoyment of those areas. However, some infrastructure e.g. stormwater, can provide multi use options and environmental benefits e.g. habitat enhancement.

Conflicting activities on public open space can undermine the predominant purpose of a particular public open space type (eg. playing sport in a passive recreation area can undermine the sense of peace a person expects to experience in a passive area). This must be balanced against multiple use of public open space (e.g. sports fields designed to also manage stormwater).

The closure of sports grounds during Auckland's winter month's is an example of how the quality of public open space affects use and enjoyment.¹³

¹³ New Zealand Herald, 11 July, 2011 'Field of Dreams Turns Into Boggy Disenchantment

Poorly located open space, such as reserves that are located at the rear of houses, have little passive surveillance from the public at large with the potential to create personal safety concerns for users of the reserve as well as the residential properties themselves. Poorly lit open spaces and inappropriately placed vegetation (e.g. associated with walkways) may also put the safety of users at risk. The resulting outcome of actual and perceived safety concerns can result in a significant lowering of overall neighbourhood amenity and potentially a reduced use of public open space, potentially further exacerbating safety issues.

Submissions to the Auckland Plan Discussion Document – Auckland unleashed, highlighted the need for accessible and safe facilities and environments.¹⁴

The effects of activities taking place on public open space can be detrimental to properties adjoining the public open space. These can include traffic generation, noise from crowds and public address systems, glare from floodlighting, and overshadowing or visual intrusion by buildings/structures located on public open space.

Motor sport activities have unique environmental effects which need to be managed appropriately and may require those activities to be restricted to specific locations. These effects may adversely impact upon people's health and well-being

Conversely activities and development on land adjoining open space can impact on people's experience of the open space. Examples include noise, lighting, encroachments, building location and design.

Broad Approaches

Regulatory

- Unitary Plan open space zones, activity tables and performance standards
- Concept plans (incorporated into the UP – but this can result in limited flexibility)
- Buffers to parks (i.e. zoning and design requirements which prevent inappropriate development adjoining parks e.g. Ardmore, where residential activity compromised the ability to have a viable motorcross venue)
- Unitary Plan subdivision performance standards (location and design of public open space)
- Reserve Management Plans
- CPTED principles
- Resource consent conditions
- Infrastructure activity tables and performance standards

Non Regulatory

- Parks and reserves design guidelines (e.g. the design and layout of public open space, including delineation of public open space boundaries)
- Parks and reserve categories
- Auckland Region Sportsfield Demand Project
- Reserve Management Plans
- Acquisition Plan – to secure public open space as part of a planned/coordinated approach
- Parks policy on commercial use of public open space
- Concessions/licences for commercial activities

¹⁴ Submissions to Auckland Unleashed, 2011 – Sport, Recreation and Events



Sports field closures during winter

Issue – Tangata Whenua and Open Space

The region's public open spaces could better express Tangata Whenua's relationship with the land and natural and cultural resources associated with the public open space.

Explanation

The Council has a statutory responsibility under Sections 6(e), 7 and 8 of the Resource Management Act to promote processes and mechanisms that will provide better protection of tangata whenua taonga which include both natural and cultural aspects of heritage.

Natural heritage (e.g. indigenous ecosystems such as: forests, wetlands, streams, rivers and estuaries; landscape features, views; indigenous wildlife; and geological sites), and cultural heritage (e.g. archaeological sites, waahi tapu, historic buildings and structures) resources can be lost, damaged or desecrated if they are not identified and protected. The protection of land (e.g. through acquisition or covenants) that contains natural and cultural heritage features as public open space can assist in the protection of, and public access to these resources for future generations.

The former Auckland City Council's research has shown that residents of the former Auckland City feel Auckland's open spaces do not express the city's cultural diversity, the city's place in the wider context of the Pacific or the values of tangata whenua.¹⁵

Broad Approaches

Regulatory

- Unitary Plan (protection of archaeological sites/waahi tapu)
- Reserve Management Plans/Iwi Management Plans
- Conservation Plans

Non Regulatory

- Land acquisition
- Co-governance arrangements/agreements
- Park and landscape design, including landscape interpretation with elements such as arts and culture installations reflecting Tangata Whenua's association with the landscape, public open space
- Maori values assessment

¹⁵ Brecknock Consulting, 2005, Intercultural Study

Issues - Public Access to the Coast, Lakes & Rivers (Esplanade reserves and strips)

Provision for the maintenance and enhancement of public access to and along the coastal marine area, lakes and rivers contribute to the protection of conservation values, and enable public recreational use of the esplanade reserve or strip and the adjacent water body, where the use is compatible with conservation values. Some existing Council arrangements e.g. between organisations such as Highbrook Park Trust may give rise to conflicts of interest in terms of private development v public access.

Existing and potential public access to and along lakes, rivers and the coast, and the conservation values of these areas may be adversely affected by subdivision and land use activities.

Situations where esplanade reserves might be reduced or waived, such as high erosion areas, low lying areas vulnerable to inundation by sea-level rise. Esplanade strips may be more appropriate in these situations.

Inappropriate public access to the coast and river margins may cause disturbances to valued habitats, local neighbourhoods, historic and archaeological sites. These may result in a loss of the habitats themselves or of the neighbourhood/adjacent property amenity (e.g visual privacy). Such losses may be as a result of physical intrusion, or air, water or noise pollution with such impacts resulting either from the activities themselves, or from structures and associated facilities. Traffic generation and parking needs are major impacts that can be a particular problem within coastal areas where space is limited and where the intrinsic natural attributes can be quickly degraded through pressure of human activity.

Coastal erosion (e.g. liability issues where coastal erosion is affecting private property).

Explanation

The Resource Management Act states that it is a matter of national importance for local authorities to recognise and provide for the maintenance and enhancement of public access to and along the coastal marine area, lakes and rivers. The Act also states that, as a matter of national importance, local authorities must provide for the preservation of the natural character of the coastal environment, wetlands, lakes and rivers and protect them from inappropriate subdivision, use and development. Much of the coastline of the Region and some wetlands, lakes and rivers are within the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park. The New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement has also strengthened the importance of public access to the coast in the last review. It has also provided a clear criteria against which all beaches must be assessed to see whether vehicles on beaches should be allowed.

Development in both rural and urban areas can impact upon the extent of existing access and may reduce the potential to enhance it in the future. Also, as population grows and becomes more mobile, demand may increase. To ensure that access to the coast, lakes and rivers is maintained and to assist in preserving natural character (although this is a far larger concept than just protecting 20m of land), the Act requires that, unless Council specifies otherwise, esplanade reserves must be vested when sites less than 4 hectares are created abutting the coast, lakes and rivers.

Esplanade reserves and strips are composed of land adjoining the coast, rivers, streams or lakes. Esplanade reserves are vested in the Council and are static, while the land comprising esplanade strips remains in private ownership and may move with the mean high water springs.

Broad Approaches

Regulatory

- Unitary Plan rules setting out the requirements for esplanade reserves and strips (based on the Act's requirements)

- Unitary Plan criteria (or objectives and policies) to provide guidance on the situations where public access to the coast, rivers and lakes may not be required and/or the width of access may be reduced

Non Regulatory

- Land acquisition
- Negotiation of easements and covenants
- Physical works in the form of wharfs, boat launching facilities, tracks, board walks, bridges etc to provide physical access



Public access to the coast – Mission Bay

Issue – Open Space Network/Linkages

A well-connected open space network provides a wide array of benefits to people and flora and fauna and helps to conserve natural ecosystem values and functions water and air quality, erosion and stormwater management. There is the potential to improve the linkages between open spaces so that a well connected network is achieved.

Explanation

While the region has a multitude of varied open spaces, the connectivity between these spaces could be improved. For example, parks and civic spaces currently function as discrete areas in response to levels of service that emphasise proximity and accessibility but not connectivity. Improving connections between open space areas may help to address demands for a greater quantity of open space by increasing accessibility.

Open space connections include roads (including unformed paper roads), footpaths, walking tracks, cycleways, mountain bike tracks, bridledways. Tamaki Drive, the Browns Bay boardwalk, and nationally, the coastal walkway in New Plymouth are good examples of where the provision of high quality networks in scenic environments greatly enhances use.

The Auckland Plan identified the following opportunities for cycleways, walkways & bridle trails :

Linkages and accessibility

- Extending existing bridledway, cycleway and walkway connections, and maximising opportunities for these to also function as ecological corridors
- Improving transport networks between areas of open space

Development and infrastructure provision

- Infrastructure proposals and upgrading can create opportunities to improve or add to open space provision, if the timing and communication with infrastructure agencies is incorporated into the planning process. For example, by initiating improvements to open space provision (the provision of cycleways and walkways) and amenity in transport corridors at the time of the redevelopment, provision and upgrading of transport networks.

Integration

- To provide an overarching open space framework that achieves a linked open space network by developing a common understanding of open space needs and demands, issues, problems and solutions

Key goals/priorities for open space across the region include:

- To improve the connections and linkages between areas of open space (joining up the “green dots”)
- - the creation of networks of strategic open space, such as green chains and green corridors
- - the development of recreational routes for walking, cycling, public art and heritage trails, horse riding and boating (kayaking) that connect parks and reserves to residential areas and community facility hubs through reserve acquisitions, easements, esplanade reserves and capital developments

Submissions on the Auckland Plan Discussion Document – Auckland Unleashed, requested a clearly articulated Parks Strategy to identify the interlinking of parks networks and the different categories of parks. Respondents felt that increased connectivity would support more accessible park networks. It was suggested that this could be achieved through the use of paper roads, road berms and the use of school grounds for recreation.¹⁶

Broad Approaches

Regulatory

- Structure Plans and Concept Plans incorporated into the Unitary Plan and identifying where open space linkages are required particularly in greenfield areas (given effect to through the subdivision process)

Non Regulatory

- Structure Plans, Area Plans and Precinct Plans identifying potential open space linkages
- Capital works projects – e.g. construction of cycleways, walkways and bridle trails
- Open space framework
- Parks levels of provision

¹⁶ Auckland Council. Submissions to the Auckland Plan Discussion Document, 2011



Tamaki Drive - Auckland



Coastal walkway – New Plymouth

Issue - The Management of Public Open Space (Parks & Reserves Categories/Zones/Outcome Areas)

How should public open space be managed? The District Plan's of the former Auckland TLA's collectively have 31 different recreation zones. The preparation of the Unitary Plan provides an opportunity to rationalise the number of zones and ensure consistency with the parks and reserve categories being developed by Community and Cultural Policy.

To what extent does the Unitary Plan's rules (specifically the activity tables and performance standards) refer to approved reserve management plans.

Explanation

Auckland Council has inherited a variety of approaches to categorising parks and reserves from the former Auckland TLA's. The amalgamation of these organisations provides an opportunity to rationalise these approaches and develop one integrated system that can be applied to all parks and reserves in the region.

Categories for parks and reserves are used in a variety of ways to inform the planning and management of the open space network. Examples include:

- guiding the efficient development and consistent application of policies to parks and reserves with similar uses and functions
- providing a method of assessing the provision of recreational and environmental outcomes provided by parks and reserves across the region
- identifying and communicating the outcomes sought by the council, such as appropriate activities and development, for parks and reserves with similar uses and functions
- determining appropriate maintenance standards and asset provision for parks and reserves from an operational perspective
- allocation of appropriate locations for community facilities

Auckland Council's proposed parks and reserves categories (led by Community & Cultural Policy with input from relevant sections of Council) are based on a set developed nationally by the New Zealand Recreation Association. The draft categories are:

Heritage
Volcanic Features
Coastal
Nature
Ecological
Informal recreation
Sport and Active Recreation
Civic Space¹⁷

The Unitary Plan may not require all 8 categories, but the zones (or outcomes areas) arrived at should be consistent with those categories being developed by Community & Cultural Planning and could combine some of the categories where the outcomes sought are similar.

The role of the Unitary Plan is to provide a framework for the management of the effects from the development and use of open space. The specific needs of each open space (gazetted as reserve) are addressed by the Reserves Act 1977, the Local Government Act 2002 (for regional parks) and management plans. It should be noted however that not all parks are classified under the Reserves Act.

The Reserves Act 1977 stipulates what constitutes a reserve, provides a classification of reserves (the use of which is voluntary) (as recreation, scenic, nature, historic, scientific, Government purpose, or local) and governs the uses that are allowed to take place on each type of reserve. It also specifies how land can be acquired for a reserve, what can not take place in reserves, and the procedures that must be adhered to concerning any business regarding reserves. These provisions should then be articulated in Reserve Management Plan/s (as is required under Section 41 of the Act) which are open for public submission before being adopted. The relationship of the Reserves Act to the Resource Management Act is a complementary one. Together the Acts operate a dual mechanism for the protection and management of land held as reserve land under the Reserves Act. The Resource Management Act sets the legal basis for the District Plan in managing the effects on the environment of activities taking place on public open space zones. While the Reserves Act ultimately determines the types of uses appropriate for those areas held under the Reserves

¹⁷ Community and Cultural Policy team – Open Space Policy – Core Programme Review Group, 19 July 2011

Act, the purpose and principles of the Resource Management Act must guide all environmental policy and management. However in doing so consideration must be given to any management plans and strategies prepared under other Acts (Resource Management Act, Section 74(2)(b)).

Broad Approaches

Regulatory

- Fully adopt the parks and reserves categories being developed by Community & Cultural Policy as the zones or outcomes areas for the Unitary Plan; or
- Combine some of the similar categories where the outcomes sought are similar to produce a smaller number of zones for the Unitary Plan (for example – Heritage, Volcanic Features, Nature and Coastal, could be combined); or
- Utilise a smaller number of zones but make use of overlays to provide for matters such as heritage and nature (natural features)
- Unitary Plan is silent on approved reserve management plans. They are “other matters the consent authority considers relevant and reasonably necessary to determine the application” under s.104(c) of the RMA, or
- Unitary Plan has regard to approved Reserve Management Plans e.g in assessment criteria.

Issue – The Management of Major Recreational Facilities (includes Sports Stadia, Arts and Culture Venues, Racecourses, Motor Racing tracks, commercial recreation facilities)

Major recreational facilities provide economic and social benefits to the community but have the potential to affect the amenity values of adjacent areas.

There are reverse sensitivity issues associated with sensitive activities (e.g. residential) adjacent to major recreation facilities.

The efficient use of resources – in the form of major recreation facilities.

Explanation

The amenity values of the area surrounding major recreation facilities may be adversely affected by buildings and structures and activities occurring there. For example – noise, glare from flood lights, dust and odour, loss of visual and aural privacy, effects on road safety, traffic congestion, and anti-social behaviour (after events).

Reverse sensitivity issues associated with the existence or development of sensitive activities (typically residential) around facilities. This has the potential to compromise the use of the existing resource.

Existing facilities involve significant public or private investment. The efficient use of these resources is therefore an issue. There is the opportunity to provide for a wide range of activities, including business and community activities to the extent that the facilities operate as multi-purpose resources for the community/region. These activities can diversify the income sources for the owners at times when they are not used for their primary purpose. The issue is the extent to which the Unitary Plan provides for these opportunities and the effect on amenity values of the surrounding area.

Broad Approaches

Regulatory

- Open Space zoning and associated rules
- Special Purpose – “Major Recreation Facilities” zoning and associated rules
- Concept plans (these are typically associated with a zone) but can be used to specify site specific controls e.g building envelopes, height controls



Eden Park – Mt Eden



Rainbows End - Manukau

Issue – The Management of Private Open Space e.g Golf courses, bowling clubs

There is the perception among the community that some private open spaces (e.g. golf courses) are “public” open space.

Private open space do provide amenity and visual benefits (in addition to recreational facilities)

Explanation

There are over 30 golf courses within the Auckland region (excluding the small pitch & putt courses and driving ranges). They comprise a mix of public and private courses and public land that has been leased to commercial operators. The District Plans of the former Auckland

TLA's zone golf courses as either Open Space or Recreation or as the same zoning as the surrounding land e.g. general rural, main residential. Gulf Harbour and Formosa are the exceptions with Special Purpose zonings.

The public perception is often that golf courses are public land and the golf course will remain there indefinitely. The subdivision of adjacent residential land is often laid out to maximise views/take advantage of the adjacent golf course. There is community opposition when a "private" golf course (which may have an open space zoning) is either developed or a portion sold off to be developed. Examples of where this has occurred are North Shore Golf Club – open space zoning (which has subdivided and sold off surplus land as residential sections) and Peninsular Golf Course – future urban zoning, where the entire course may be developed as housing (subject to a private plan change). This raises the issue of the appropriate zoning or management technique (assuming zoning is a technique used by the Unitary Plan) for golf courses, particularly private golf courses so that the public are aware that they are not part of the public open space network.

Broad Approaches

Regulatory

- Public open space (or equivalent) zoning for publicly owned golf courses and golf courses on public land that have been leased to a commercial operator
- The same zoning as the surrounding area for privately owned golf courses
- A Special Purpose zoning for some or all golf courses (e.g Gulf Harbour Country Club, Formosa)

Issue - Temporary recreational events/activities

There are many recreational activities of a temporary nature which occur throughout the region at different times for different purposes. These activities have significant economic, social and cultural benefits. The majority have only minor temporary adverse effects, but some activities may generate more than minor adverse effects.

Explanation

The effects associated with temporary events and activities are normally tolerated by the community because;

- The activity provides a special service or fulfils a necessary function;
- The activity is a one off or infrequent event; and
- The effect is only of a short term duration.

The community therefore has a slightly wider margin of tolerance with temporary activities. Furthermore, the costs and practicalities of restricting temporary activities is usually outweighed by the short term duration and the social, cultural or economic benefits of such activities. However it is important to avoid or control temporary activities generating significant adverse environmental effects.

Broad Approaches

Regulatory - Bylaw

- Control recreational activities or events through the Event Permit or equivalent (former Auckland City Council by-law)

Regulatory - Unitary Plan

- Define the scope of temporary recreational activities (these will sit as part of a wider group of temporary activities);
- Enable those temporary recreational activities with minor adverse effects as permitted activities through the Unitary Plan rules;

- Set a threshold (relating to scale, duration, and nuisance effects such as noise) for when a temporary recreational activity or event with potentially significant adverse effects would require a resource consent.

Combination By-law & Unitary Plan

- Unitary Plan as above
- Bylaw could control aspects of temporary recreational activities or events e.g waste management, traffic management etc

Non - regulatory

- Events policy
- Reserve Management Plans/Iwi Management Plans



Round the bays fun run- Auckland