

Mrs Marilyn Bulloch
Railway Land Action Group Inc.
C/- 128 Cook Street
Palmerston North 4010

Phone 06 357 7338
Email: marilynbulloch@gmail.com

We wish to speak to our submission.

Submission

Future Use of Huia Street Reserve

1. Our submission relates to the whole of the proposal.

2. Our Submission is that:

We are opposed to Palmerston North City Council's preferred option (Option 1): The Proposal being that the council initiates the necessary amendments to the Palmerston North reserves Act 1922 and / or the Palmerston North Reserves Empowering Act 1966 and the District Plan to enable the sale or development of Huia Street Reserve for housing.

Also, we would not support Option 5: Enable the Sale or Development of Huia Street Reserve for a Commercial Purpose or Option 2: being to Land Bank the Site. Land Banking leads to too much future uncertainty.

We would support the following options:

Option 3: Develop for Recreational Purposes.

Option 4: Consider Proposals from the Community to use the site for a Recreational, Cultural or Community Purpose

Options 3 and 4 are more or less the status quo and so no changes to zoning or legislation are required at the present time. Any proposals would need to conform to the Reserves Act 1977.

For reasons for our opposition and support see below (page 2).

3. We seek the following decision from the Palmerston North City Council:

That the Palmerston North city Council withdraw their decision to initiate the necessary amendments to the Palmerston North Reserves Act 1922 and /or the Palmerston North Reserve Empowering Act 1966 and the District Plan to enable the sale or development of Huia Street for housing (or any other similar purposes).

We also request that Option 5: [to Enable the sale or development of Huia St Reserve for a Commercial Purpose] be rejected. Changes to Acts and District Plans would also be required as for Option 1 for housing.

Option 2: [Land Banking the Site], although no legislative changes are required, this option should also be rejected due to future uncertainty regarding the use of the land.

Reasons for our support for, and opposition to, options and further Comment

Historical reasons for keeping this land.

We note on page 5 of the Statement of Proposal document a brief outline of the history of this site and surrounding parkland which was given to the City (Borough?) in 1876 by the Provincial Government. We especially note the statement that the reserve was given as *“a public park and recreation ground and botanical garden for the inhabitants of Palmerston North and its vicinity”*.

Selling or developing any of this land is not in keeping with this purpose. Nothing has changed since 1878, citizens still need public green spaces, in fact, even more so these days. The fact that there is other parkland nearby does not negate the need for this land as a public park. Much of this nearby land is sports fields which are very exposed to the elements.

Recent History of the Land (2005 to 2009)

The background information also fails to mention the more recent history of the land. In 2005, fifteen years ago, the site was attractive and well used. We remember an attractive Bowling Club hall which was built in the 1960's. Large windows in this building overlooked a number of bowling greens and a Petanque course adjacent to Fitzherbert Avenue. The Council, in the public excluded Part II of a meeting on 29 June 2005, voted on resolutions to sell this land. The public was not aware of this decision to sell this land.

On 14 September 2006 a public notice appeared in the Manawatu Standard headed Palmerston North Reserves Empowering Amendment Act 2006 – Notice of Intention to promote a local Bill. Then, as of now, PNCC was intending to sell this Bowling Club Land. There was much public opposition to any sale of the land. The Tennis Club had not been made aware of this Bill.

The matter of this decision to sell was raised at a meeting of the Awapuni Ward Committee on 3rd October 2006. The public only then became aware of the 2005 decision to sell. The meeting was attended by members of the Manawatu Lawn Tennis Club who had leased the land for over 50 years at that time.

A number of recommendations were made by the Ward Committee to Council including that:*46.1.1 The council rescind its earlier decision regarding the sale of the land on the corner of Park Road and Fitzherbert Avenue, and maintain the land in community ownership as a reserve. And 46.1.2 Noted its disappointment regarding the sale of the land on the corner of Park Road and Fitzherbert Avenue; as no meaningful consultation had taken place with the public at large and the immediate stakeholder, and that the decision was made in a Part II meeting with the public excluded.*

Following this Ward Committee Meeting 10 Councillors signed a Notice of Motion to rescind the decision to sell the land (Council meeting 30 October 2006). This motion was passed but put back to a second vote when a then councillor questioned if the Bill had at that point been introduced into the House and he also asked if a Bill could be withdrawn. The CEO at the time, Mr Paul Wylie, replied that the Bill had been introduced and that Bills could not be withdrawn. Following this incorrect information the Motion was put back to the vote and the Motion was lost.

The passage of this Local Bill continued when it was introduced into Parliament by local M.P. Steve Maharey on 28 March 2007 (see Hansard). The Railway Land Action Group and others spoke at a Select Committee Hearing on 26 July 2007 stating our opposition to the Bill. Subsequently the Select Committee wrote in a letter dated 20 August to PNCC recommending the withdrawal of the Bill. As a consequence of this advice to PNCC a resolution was passed by Council to withdraw the Bill.

Over the time period of 2005 to 2009 the land in question became derelict with the Bowling club being forced off the site, the Petanque court uplifted, the club rooms abandoned and neglected. In 2009 the Club rooms were demolished following a fire. The Manawatu Tennis club continued to lease the site of their courts with a five- year renewal of the lease. Ever since this time the site has been deliberately neglected and allowed to appear derelict, littered with tree debris and no indication that this corner site is a public park. An attractive sheltering variegated Totara hedge was bulldozed to allow the widening of the adjacent roads for a slip-way on the corner intersection.

What We Want

In a submission dated 23 April 2008 the Railway Land Action Group made a submission to PNCC's Draft Annual Plan 2008/2009 in which we referred to this former Bowling Club site. What we requested then is still relevant to this day, despite a reference to the now long- gone club rooms. Our submission included the following statement:

We request that the grounds be maintained with the planting of shrubs, trees and flower gardens. It should also be obvious to anyone passing this land is public land so signage should be put in place and entrance ways made obvious. Sheltered seating could also be provided. At the moment this site has been allowed to deteriorate which leads to even more vandalism. The site could be locked up at night to prevent vandalism.

Some ideas for this valuable public land include the development of a Japanese garden, placement of Maori carvings over the entrance ways, a garden plot planted with vegetables and fruit

Since writing this request we have been made aware that the site may not be suitable for community gardens as the soil is certainly contaminated with toxic chemical used in the maintenance of the bowling greens. We have been informed that arsenated lead was used to treat Grass Grub in Bowling Club greens. Further information on this matter can be sought from the following: "Ministry for Environment, National Environmental Standard for Assessing and Managing Contaminates in Soil to Protect Human Health".

As already stated, it should be noted that any community proposal to use the land as described in Option 4 would need to conform to the restraints of the Reserve Act 1977 and the Recreation Zoning, although such restraints do not seem to bother the PNCC.

Reasons for rejecting Council's Preferred Option 1, as Described in Appendix A: Potential Housing Development Scenarios. Including Baseline, Multi Unit Housing and Apartments.

We note, as stated, that all of these options are compliant with the current District Plan except for the option of 3 story apartments.

We all acknowledge that there is a need for more housing in New Zealand and some of us supported the Multi Unit Housing in the Review of the District Plan but we never envisioned that they would be built on public parks. We believe that this site is unsuitable for housing, being adjacent to such a congested, noisy, polluted intersection - all factors not good for human health, especially the young. This housing may revert to Motel units in the future as a result of a poor location.

Housing would also conflict with the adjoining Tennis Club activities, especially from lighting and noise up to 9 pm at night. Housing on this site would also preclude the option of the Tennis Club extending its number of playing courts in the future.

Naming of the site as Huia Street Reserve

It has come as a bit of surprise to see this site being known as Huia Street Reserve. In 1878 when the Council obtained this site from the Government of the day was Huia Street in existence? Were these 4 lots an extension of the nearby Manawaroa Park or Ongley Park? How did the name of Huia Street come about?

Similar Local Bill passed in 2003

A Palmerston North Reserves Empowering Amendment Bill bought under the Palmerston North Reserves Empowering Act an area of land that is vested in the Council and sought by the Crown for the purpose of expanding the Palmerston North Girls High School. A notice of this as dated 19 May 2003. The M.P. in charge of this Bill was Hon Steve Maharey. A new school building was put on this site.