

16 March 2023

Submission on Kawerau District Plan – Plan Change 4 Roy Stoneham Park Residential Development

Introduction

Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa, the Outdoor Access Commission is the Crown agent responsible for providing leadership on outdoor access issues.

Our role is to provide advice on free, certain, enduring, and practical access to the outdoors.

We administer a national strategy on outdoor access, including tracks and trails. We map outdoor access, provide information to the public, oversee a code of responsible conduct in the outdoors, help resolve access issues and negotiate new access.

Herenga ā Nuku has a team in Wellington and a network of regional field advisors. An independent board governs our work. Our governing piece of legislation is the *Walking Access Act 2008*.

Much of our work focuses on active transport. We support the creation, maintenance, enhancement, and promotion of outdoor access, including walking and cycling access, for recreation, for safety, health and well-being, for a shift to more sustainable travel, and including for commuting to local destinations such as schools, places of work and shops.

This submission aligns with one of our core roles: advocating for, negotiating, and developing outdoor access.

Part 1 – Reserve Status Exchange

Herenga ā Nuku notes that the reserve exchange is not 'like for like'. We encourage Kawerau District Council to ensure that the new reserve provides for any activities displaced from the current Roy Stoneham reserve and incorporates future population growth into planning for the reserve.

Part 2 – District Plan Change 4

Herenga ā Nuku would like to continue to be involved in this Plan Change and reserve development process, particularly as plans for the new reserve progress.

Herenga ā Nuku recognises that the current Roy Stoneham reserve has many access points and connects the surrounding community and the Kawerau township. The park and the accessways to the park provide connection to roads, public spaces and housing areas. We request that this connectivity be retained within the new proposed residential development so that public access through this area remains and connection corridors allow for continued access.

We note that the Veros Stoneham Park Residential Development concept plan does show the inclusion of a walking area into and through the proposed housing area through a 'secondary pedestrian access/connection', and the concept includes 'interconnected green park spaces' within the new development. Connectivity allows for continuous access and a network of public access. Connectivity helps connect people to the landscape; thus, having pedestrian access to the Growth Precinct and through it is vital to maintaining connectivity.

We support these access routes and connectivity and would like these to be included in Plan Change 4 so the community has a sense of what the Growth Precinct will look like.

Herenga ā Nuku notes that Roy Stoneham Park is, at present, important for the surrounding community and the larger Kawerau township for exercise, dog walking, recreation and access to the outdoors. The new proposed reserve at the 'Stock Pound' is at least 15 minutes' walk from Roy Stoneham Park. There must be a safe and practical walking and cycling connection between Roy Stoneham Park and the new recreation reserve at the Stock Pound to enable those who live close to Roy Stoneham reserve or who use it regularly to easily and safely access the new reserve at the Stock Pound. Herenga ā Nuku would also like safe and practical access to the new reserve from schools and surrounding important congregation areas.

Herenga ā Nuku supports engaging and involving tangata whenua in the planning and design of the Growth Precinct and encourages Kawerau District Council to investigate the Mātauranga Māori and the significance of the whenua at Roy Stoneham Park to tangata whenua, and to encapsulate any feedback or suggestions to reflect this.

Plan Change 4 offers no certainty or plan of what access there will be into and through the Growth Precinct but instead offers a concept that is open to change and has no legal status. Similarly, the Growth Precinct's conditions do not include access through or into the precinct. Therefore Herenga ā Nuku **opposes** Plan Change 4 based on accessibility. We suggest that the Residential Growth Precinct Provisions include a direct reference to providing for active transport and connectivity to and through the site.

Recommendations

1. We recommend maintaining the connectivity and public access currently afforded by the Roy Stoneham reserve. Specifically, we would like to see the roading within the new development kept as public roads, not private. We would encourage a connection corridor to and through the new development to maintain connectivity and ensure public access to the outdoors is not reduced or affected in this area.
2. Herenga ā Nuku recommends creating a walking and cycling track between the current recreation reserve at Roy Stoneham Park and the new proposed recreation reserve at the Stock Pound. This track/access route will provide an important access corridor and a link between the two spaces (that is, between the existing Roy Stoneham Park and the proposed new reserve).

Part 3 – Ideas for new reserve development

Herenga ā Nuku supports the development of a new reserve area and the request for community input. We note that there is an important public access reserve and walk near the new proposed reserve. This area is known as the Stoneham Walk Reserve. We recommend that the new reserve connects the other public spaces in the area, including the Stoneham Walk, the Monika Lanham Reserve and the Prideaux Park, and the two recreation reserves off Valley Road to the north and west of the Stock Pound, and the reserve area off Fenton Mill Road to the east of the Stock Pound land parcel.

Herenga ā Nuku supports engaging and involving tangata whenua in the plans for the new reserve and encourages Kawerau District Council to investigate the Mātauranga Māori and the significance of the whenua, and to encapsulate any feedback or suggestions to reflect this.

Recommendations

1. Herenga ā Nuku recommends creating a walking and cycle track between the current recreation reserve at Roy Stoneham Park and any other important places of congregation (such as schools) and the new proposed recreation reserve at the Stock Pound. This track/access route will provide an important access corridor and a link between spaces.
2. Herenga ā Nuku recommends that the new reserve provides open space for activities that the Roy Stoneham Park reserve may have been or could have been used for (that is, activities that require flat open space and or sporting infrastructure like soccer goals or field markings).

3. Herenga ā Nuku recommends that the new reserve provides linkages and connectivity to other public spaces in town. There are multiple public spaces near the new reserve, and these should be connected to enhance access.
4. Herenga ā Nuku recommends tangata whenua participate in developing the new reserve.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on Plan Change 4. Herenga ā Nuku is happy to advise and assist with matters of public access related to this plan change.