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Subject: (ECM:709495) Re RM240115 – Council response to post-notification amendments for 597 Horahora Road, Arapuni
Categories: ECM

Outdoor Access Commission - Herenga ā Nuku response to request for submitters to advise whether they wish to confirm, amend or withdraw their existing submission.

Re RM240115 – Council response to post-notification amendments

1. The commission wishes to **confirm and amend** its existing submission.

4.2 Technical review matters

Council's preference is for the applicant to investigate relocating the trail closer to the Waikato River and to address the timing of its construction so that the trail is not deferred until the final stage. The feasibility, design, bridge requirements and other infrastructure implications of that option require further discussion with the applicant.

2. We agree that the applicant should work with the Waikato River Trails Charitable Trust to move the trail to the esplanade reserve at the design stage, rather than trying to retrofit the trail. A good, workable route may become possible because of the extensive earthworks required for the subdivision. This would also help to avoid construction-related safety and disruption impacts.

5.2 Earthworks and landform

The amended earthworks design substantially reduces the extent and volume of earthworks, particularly within Stage 3. The revised design retains more of the existing gully, natural terraces and surrounding landform...

3. We agree that reducing the impact on the character and amenity of public access to the river and to the Waikato River Trail in this location is desirable and will result in greater enjoyment for recreational users and residents.

5.4 Ecological effects

The amended proposal provides improved ecological outcomes through additional indigenous planting, greater protection of the existing gully and improved habitat connectivity. These benefits depend on the Ecological Management Plan and scheme plans being amended to address the matters identified by Council's ecological peer reviewer and on the proposed restoration areas being legally protected and maintained.

4. We anticipate a new esplanade reserve will support public access for ecological management, restoration, cultural purposes and recreation.
5. The ecological review considers planting and bat habitat. When Te Awa River Ride was being developed through Hammond Park in Hamilton, there were concerns about the path crossing bat habitat – a walkway remains, and cyclists are asked to dismount there. It is unknown if the impacts of the walkway or cycle access in this area have been assessed.
6. It is worth considering collaboration between any Waikato River Trails realignment planning with ecological assessors to minimise any conflicts.

5.6 Public access and the Waikato River Trail

The inclusion of a 10-metre esplanade strip along the Waikato River frontage is an improvement over the notified proposal and provides a mechanism for securing future public access along the river margin.

7. We agree.

Relocating the trail closer to the river could improve safety and public-access outcomes by separating trail users from vehicle movements.

8. We agree and submit that this will improve outcomes for users. It will be much easier to achieve this at the planning stage than as a retrofit. Early planning and coordination will achieve better public access outcomes, including for the local residents, while appropriately incorporating mana whenua perspectives as part of the Council's planning and engagement responsibilities.

Recommendations

The commission recommends that consent only be granted if practical public access issues are addressed at planning stages and implemented to:

- minimise disruption to the Waikato River Trails,
- realign the trail if the Waikato River Trails Charitable Trust deems this suitable, and
- maximise public access benefits.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further feedback.

Ngā mihi,
Rachel



Connecting people
Connecting places

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