

Open Space Evaluation

In support of PV 3 for the Wesley College SHA, GDL provided an Open Space Assessment report¹. The report provided an assessment of the existing qualities of the Wesley College land and GDL's vision for its development as a new town against the Auckland Council open space policy direction. The report established the overarching open space strategy and the open space network for the Precinct which was incorporated into the master planning work for the site (see Figure 2 below)

The report outlined GDL's intentions that the development of the Precinct would deliver high-performing, multi-functional and well-connected open spaces that would contribute to the distinctive character, quality and amenity of the residential environment within the Franklin 2 Precinct.

The development of the Franklin 2 Precinct's open space network in PV 3 was informed by:

- Auckland Council's Parks and Open Space Strategic Action Plan (2013),
- Parks and Open Space Acquisition Policy (2013) and
- Interim Parks and Open Space Guidelines (as of 10 June 2014)

The overarching objective for the Precinct's open space network was, and continues to be, to create open spaces that will be frequently used, well-loved and enjoyed by the new community. The open space strategy plays an important role in the town's urban form, its place-based character and distinctiveness, its legibility and its memorability.

The vision for the open space network was framed by four open space principles:

- Legibility and Amenity,
- Multi-functionality,
- Interconnectedness and
- Conservation.

The open spaces network was based upon and amplifies the site's natural assets, heritage and ecological features. The open spaces are seen as having an important existence value for the local community; meaning that even when the spaces are not actively used, they create value by their presence within the community, the amenity, outlook and perspective they provide, and the value, health and wellbeing they give to residents.

The Open Space Assessment report (2014) proposed an open space network for the precinct that accorded with the overarching strategy for the Precinct and the Auckland Council's Open Space requirements. It included:

- A 'greenway' network contiguous to the stream network comprising recreational trails, cycle and walking linkages, ecological connections and places for informal recreation;
- A large 'central' suburban park;
- A 'Village Green' centred on the established amenity of the Wesley College campus and retention of associated heritage features;
- A network of local (minimum size 3000m²) and neighbourhood (up to 1000m²) parks, sited so that residents have ready access to open space within a 5 minute walking distance of their homes;

¹ Franklin 2 Precinct: Open Space Assessment, Boffa Miskell Limited, October 2014

- Six local sports fields, including sports fields on or adjacent to future school sites;
- A west/east linear parkway located along the alignment of the Transmission Corridor,
- An open space amenity corridor adjacent SH22 incorporating specimen trees and a continuous walk/cycle way enabling potential connections to Pukekohe.

The intention being that the open space network would be delivered in line with the staging of the overall development. At the time of PV 3 there was no need or requirement for all open space to be spatially located, zoned or detailed. This remains the case with the current plan change. The specific location and design of some open spaces, such as neighbourhood parks will be advanced through the various subdivision and land use resource consent phases.

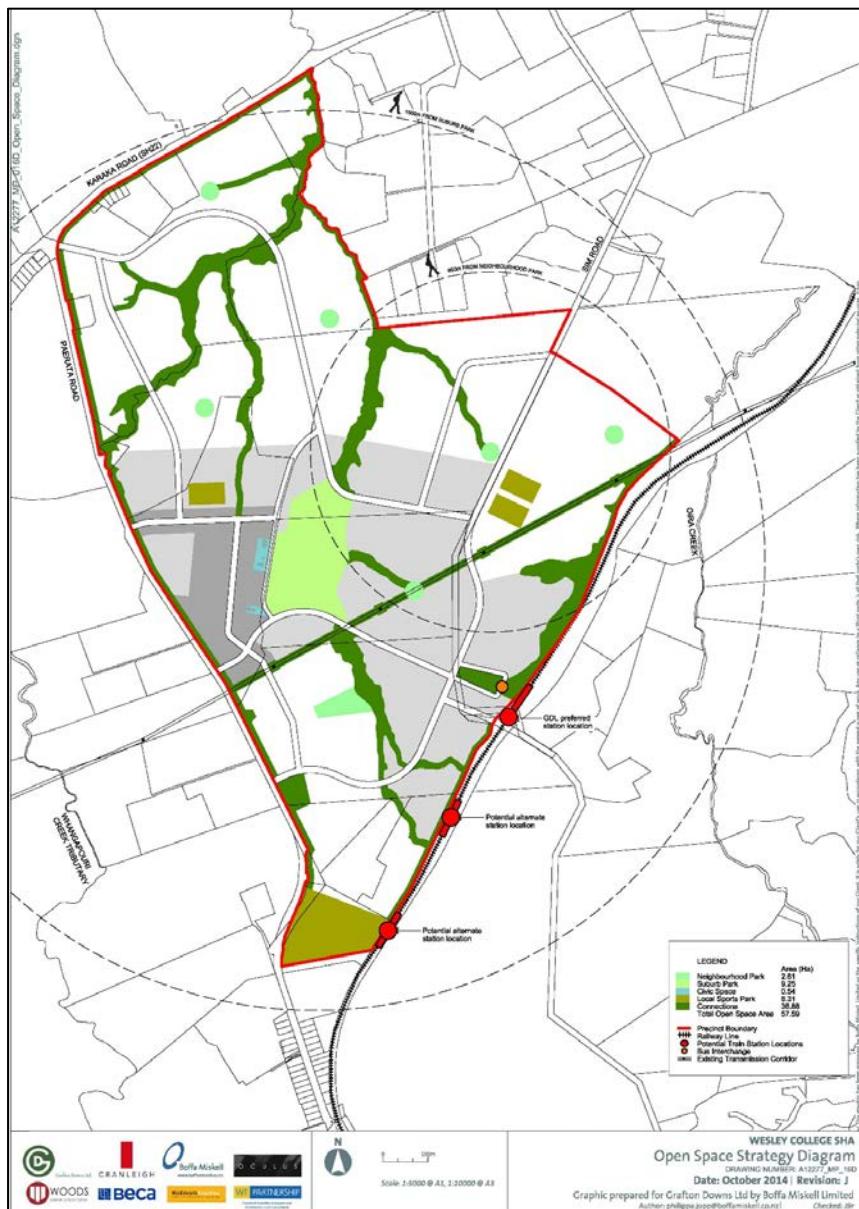


Figure 1: Proposed Franklin open space network (2014)²

² Ibid, page 4

Changes Since 2014

PV 3 was made operative in 2015, zoning the Precinct for urban development. In 2016, the enabling works for the first stages of residential subdivision commenced. In the intervening decade there have been a number of changes have occurred that have impacted on the original masterplan including the original open space network.

In addition, the Interim Parks and Open Space Guidelines (2014) has been replaced by the Open Space Provision Policy 2016. This policy informs investment decisions to create high quality open space network that contributes to Aucklanders' quality of life. It provides direction on the provision of open space at a network scale (across multiple open spaces rather than an individual site). Provision is considered on the basis of four inter-related factors:

- function;
- distribution;
- location;
- configuration.

As the initial stages of development have been undertaken in the Precinct there have been ongoing discussions with the Auckland Council's Parks Team and other public agencies. As a result of these discussions, some elements of the original open space proposals have not been pursued while other elements have been superseded by decisions made by other groups and agencies which have had implications for the development of the Precinct. These decisions include the impacts of the Supporting Growth transport designations, the Government's National Policy Statement Urban Development and the Wesley College Trust Board's decision to retain the College within the Precinct (largely on its existing site). There have also been ongoing discussions with Transpower about the future of the Transmission Corridor that traverses the Precinct and the opportunities for undergrounding and/or realignment of the existing lines.

Greenway and Local and Neighbourhood Parks

The development of the open space network has been an integral part of the first stages of subdivision and residential development within the Franklin 2 Precinct. This has included the development of the following elements of the Open Space network:

- a 'greenway' network contiguous to the stream network comprising recreational trails, cycle and walking linkages, ecological connections and places for informal recreation.
- a network of local (minimum size 3000m²) and neighbourhood (up to 1000m²) parks, sited so that residents have ready access to open space within a 5-minute walking distance of their homes.

These elements will continue to be developed as future stages of subdivision and development occur within the Precinct including the possible development of the neighbourhood park located next to the proposed local centre zone in Sim Road. In respect to the specific question about this latter park being subject to an overland flow path or potential flooding, the design of these spaces will be dealt at the time of the subdivision consents.

Retention of Wesley College within the Precinct

The Wesley College Trust Board's decision to retain the College within the Precinct (largely on its existing site) has implications for the proposed open space network (2014). The land currently occupied by the College was earmarked in the 2014 Precinct masterplan for commercial development. The redevelopment of the College site as the commercial heart of the new town would result in the loss of three existing sports fields, and other recreational facilities such as the College's gymnasium and tennis courts.

At the same time, the redevelopment of the College as the commercial heart involved the creation of a "Village Green" centred on the established amenity of the Wesley College campus and retention of associated heritage features. The Village Green was defined by the existing historic trees and the retention of certain College buildings seen as suitable for adaptive reuse such as cafes, bars and restaurants, boutique retail, community facilities and the like. This intention was embodied in the Wesley Sub Precinct Concept Plan.

With the redistribution of the commercially zoned land within the Precinct, the area earmarked for the Village Green will now be retained as part of Wesley College. Through this plan change process the scheduled notable trees in this part of the Precinct have been identified and confirmed with the Council's arborists. GDL has also indicated a willingness to retain the operative precinct provisions related to the demolition of the water tower and fire shed buildings.

Central Park

The proposed open space network (2014) provided for a large 'central' suburban park which would be within 1,500m walk of every part of the site. The central 'suburban' park was proposed as the green heart of the Precinct. It was proposed to be located on the east facing hill slope beneath the ridge of the local centre/ future 'Chapel Street' and would give identity to the community as a whole and act as the physical glue between residential neighbourhoods, commercial centre and civic services. The park would be framed by public streets to the east and south, by a riparian margin and cycle / walkways and dwellings to the west and by residential dwellings to the north.

Although Wesley College will now remain on its existing site and the commercially zoned land will be redistributed largely to the northern and southern ends of the Precinct, the intention for a "Central Park" has been retained. It continues to be seen by GDL as the community heart of the local centre atop the ridge and is designed to provide a vista to the chapel as a central reference point within the community.

Central Park is seen as a core public space from which residents and visitors alike can take in the vista of Paerātā Rise and in reciprocal provide a desirable green, spacious outlook from neighbouring homes, including those that face toward it from the east of the Precinct. The park is seen as a place that will facilitate community events, music, performances and social gatherings, a series of differently scaled paths and links (including pathways that meet the criteria for universal access) as well as multiple opportunities to pause, observe both the activity of others and nature and to rest.

The park needs to be sufficiently large so as to accommodate a diversity of planting to provide seasonal variety and change attracting users to engage with nature and connecting the park with the heritage of public open space as high amenity landscapes with horticultural interest and character as well as useable open space. The spatial qualities of the park will also provide opportunities for sculpture, artefacts and objects that can enrich the qualities of place and connect to the site's natural and cultural heritage. At its lower level, the Central Park will adjoin the mainstream corridor, cycle path and walkway network giving it good accessibility and connections into the community.

Sports Fields

The proposed open space network (2014) identified a number of potential sites for sports fields. The original master plan envisaged sports fields being developed in association with future Ministry of Education (MoE) primary and secondary schools envisaged as being required to serve the Precinct. The masterplan identified a possible new primary school being located north of Puhitahi Hill Road and a new secondary school in the north-eastern section of Precinct (east of Sim Road). In addition, two further sports fields and an associated car park were proposed in the southernmost part of the Precinct in an area identified as being prone to flooding.

In terms of the potential schools, Paerātā School, a new primary school has been established in the northern part of the Precinct and includes its own playing fields. In the case of the additional public secondary school to serve the wider development in the southern area, GDL is aware the MoE is looking at potential sites to serve the requirements of the increasing local population. Current indications are that it is unlikely the new secondary school will be located within the Precinct. The WCTB decision to retain the College on its existing site, however, will result in the retention of the existing three sports fields within the College' grounds.

In terms of the southern fields, the Support Growth Alliance work resulted in the designation of the land immediately to the north of this area for the new link road leading to the train station. Works are underway to construct the new access road, transport interchange and train station. Therefore, this area is no longer considered a suitable location for the development of sports fields. Should the Council consider there is a need for further sports fields to be provided within the Precinct this can be discussed as part of future subdivision and/or resource consent applications.

Transmission Corridor

The west/east linear parkway located along the alignment of the Transmission Corridor has also been removed from the Open Space Plan for the Precinct. Since 2014, GDL has had ongoing discussions with Transpower about the future of the Transmission Corridor and the possibilities of undergrounding the lines and/or realigning the corridor to the east and replacing the existing towers with mono poles.

In the most recent round of discussions, Transpower and GDL have reached agreement on an alternative alignment for the corridor which would see the corridor moved to the east, parallel to the rail line and then follow the alignment of a new collector road which will run along the southern boundary of the College and connect to Paerātā Road (SH 22). The Master Plan has been amended accordingly to reflect this preferred alignment. The indicative neighbourhood park currently shown under the existing Transmission Corridor would provide a basic informal recreation and social area within a short walking distance of the surrounding residential areas. Like other neighbourhood parks within the Precinct there would an opportunity to develop the area as a play space and/or for informal games with associated planting and park furniture.

SH22 Amenity Corridor

The 2014 masterplan also included a 20-metre amenity corridor along the boundary of the Precinct with SH22 that would incorporate specimen trees and a continuous walk/cycle way and enable potential connections to Pukekohe.

In undertaking the first stages of subdivision, GDL held discussions with NZTA and Auckland Transport (AT) regarding the development of the proposed amenity corridor. Neither NZTA or AT supported the proposal, and it was not pursued.

Conclusion

GDL will continue to work with the Council at each new stage of subdivision to agree the appropriate recreation and amenity needs to appropriately provide for the needs of future residents.