

Mr Hill, Mr Morrison, council staff, fellow residents.

Hello my name is Michael Crooks and I am here on behalf of the Stonefields Residents Association. Apologies from our chair Mr Paul van Dorsten who would have liked to be here today but other commitments took him out of the city.

The Association (referred to as the SRA) is an incorporated society with 600 members and around 1500 active and engaged followers on social media.

We work closely with the Orakei Local Board and developers Templeton Group and Fletcher Living to ensure projects in our suburb are beneficial to the wider community.

We SUPPORT in principle the proposal to swap the land at 50 Tihi Street with the land at 25 Barbarich Drive, but with a couple of conditions; which I will speak to later.

We have canvassed our members and they have told us that they all feel an important connection to the Maunga, it is incredibly important to the community wellbeing and it is as much a part of our community as we are a part of it. Many of the local children refer to the mountain as “their mountain” or “My mountain”.

The track between 50 Tihi Street and the turning circle on Gollan road is constantly in use during the day by both local and external community groups including fitness groups, walking clubs, cyclists and mountain bikers, parents, grandparents, and most importantly our children.

A walking school bus connects Gollan road to Stonefields School, Children play amongst the boulders and pine trees, and you often find huts and forts built among them by our budding young future engineers and generals. The track finishes the vital link to make the Stonefields Heritage trail a loop track. There is also an unformed spur track which links directly to the base of the Maunga for those willing to take on some steep paths.

During lockdowns this track was probably the busiest stretch of road in Stonefields or even the eastern suburbs, and you would be hard pressed to find a resident who did not at least once walk the track or the heritage trail during lockdown.

It is of the highest importance to the Stonefields community that this section of track and linkage to the Maunga be held in public ownership to be enjoyed for generations to come.

25 Barbarich, Lot 1, also known as Rockpile park, is currently a vacant section of land occupied only by a billboard and the guy who mows the lawn occasionally.

It has been this way for at least the 9 years that I have lived in Stonefields, and during that time I have never seen a single person using the park for anything more than a shortcut.

The park is separated from Donnelly Street by a four lane high volume arterial road which caters for around 25,000 journeys per day, and it can only be accessed via a light controlled intersection at the corner of Ngahue Drive and College Road. This intersection has seen many rear end and T type crashes over the years including a truck roll-over as recently as 2020.

Many parents in the suburb have commented to the SRA that they would never allow their children to play in that park for fear of them running out onto Ngahue Road and being hit by a car.

A parks and open spaces assessment has identified the park as low value to the community, and not required to meet their open spaces provisioning targets. Reports indicate that should it go to council hands it is likely to be planted in high density native tree plantings.

The SRA is concerned that given this site's development potential and low value as parkland placed on it by the council, it could in future be transferred to Panuku for development and we would miss our chance to secure 50 Tihi street for the community.

Should 25 Ngahue be transferred we feel it would be unlikely that any Panuku development would maintain the look and feel of the surrounding suburb, opting for low value housing and maximum bang for their buck.

There are currently 8 pocket parks and a wetland in Stonefields. With the exception of the two parks which contain playgrounds and the wetlands which contains a boardwalk, these parks are generally underutilised. We acknowledge that in this corner of Stonefields there is a lack of green space, there is only a small triangle of land on the corner of Donnelly St and Ngahue which will be returned once development is completed, and a similar small triangle exists at the cul-de-sac end of Donnelly Street bordering the roundabout. Neither are suitable for cricket games or childrens play areas.

The SRA is empathetic towards the residents in this area and understand their desire to retain the park, however the majority of our members feel that any park here will not be utilised, it won't be the cricket ground spoken of in submissions, and parents would not be comfortable letting their children play here. And while it may in the future contain a seat or two so you can sit and listen to the birdlife, it is unlikely that the benefit gained from a pocket urban forest will outweigh the benefit gained through the walking trail and future plantings of the Maunga.

We also note that the council responses only allowed a very black and white support or oppose answer. On review of the submissions, we feel that the support is a lot higher than indicated in the numbers as a large number of the opposed actually supported the proposal but with conditions.

The perfect solution would be to retain rockpile park and to obtain 50 Tihi street into public ownership, however acknowledging the reality of the post covid environment and the low level of funding available in the councils coffers, we feel it its unlikely that council would be able to secure the land at 50 Tihi Street without this deal.

With this in mind, our members generally support a swap but with the following conditions:

1. You will note that there were at least 17 submissions opposing the swap because of concerns that a 7 story apartment block would be built on lot 1, 25 Barbarich Drive.

The SRA took that concern to Fletcher living and have spoken at length with them. Fletcher Living have no wish to build an apartment block, their plans are for 2 and 3 story terraced housing (on lot 2) and stand alone buildings on lot 1, similar to the buildings already existing on College Road and Ngahue Drive

We ask that the council help to allay these concerns by formally changing the zone in lot 1 from "Residential – Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings", to "Residential - Mixed Housing Urban", this will better align the lot with the existing zoning and place a limit on housing height to avoid any potential apartment blocks from being built there, and retain views of the Maunga for residents of Donnelly street.

2. Or members noted that they utilised the existing field to cut through from the lights or bus stop onto Barbarich Drive and they did not wish to lose this ability. The SRA requests that the council slice off a section of this land to retain as a public accessway with suitable footpath and urban plantings to keep the look and feel of the suburb (similar to the steps linking Magma Cres to Barbarich drive near number 111 Barbarich Dve)
3. Where feasible we request that the council make every effort to maintain a green planted aspect to any development that would happen there, one suggestion would be a green buffer along the edge of the lot to help break up the housing and provide a visual and audible buffer between any buildings and the intersection.

In summary our members have a strong desire to maintain their connection to the Maunga through the acquisition of 50 Tihi street into the public hands. It is a key linkage between the suburb, the heritage trail, the school access and it links us to our Maunga helping to form the suburb's cultural identity.

If the land swap is the only avenue to obtain 50 Tihi Street into public ownership then we feel the benefits of obtaining 50 Tihi street far outweigh the loss we would feel by losing 25 Barbarich Drive.

We hope that the council will consider our suggestions,

Thank you for your time today.