



**MARLBOROUGH  
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Parks and Open Spaces  
Ngā Papa o Wairau

June 2024

# Wither Hills Management Plan



# Manaaki whenua, manaaki tangata

## Haere whakamua

*Care for the land, care for the people*

*Go forward*

Draft Wither Hills Management Plan

June 2024

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## Part A – Background

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### Introduction

The Wither Hills Farm Park (the Park) is an iconic and highly valued backdrop to Blenheim and the surrounding lower Wairau Valley.

Since the original purchase of land on the Wither Hills in 1944 to address soil conservation issues, a huge amount of effort over many years by the former Marlborough Catchment Board, the former Blenheim Borough Council and Marlborough District Council (the Council) has gone into stabilising these hills to protect Blenheim. Today the Park's role as a soil conservation reserve is as important as ever.

While this remains the primary purpose, the Park also provides many different experiences for visitors, including mountain biking and walking/running tracks in a rural and farmed environment. The expansive open grassland hilltops and ridgelines also offer breathtaking views towards the Inland Kaikoura Ranges and out over the town towards the Richmond Ranges and beyond to the North Island. Areas of native restoration and exotic woodland on lower slopes and valleys also enhance the environment for visitors.

In 2003, the Council adopted a management plan for the Wither Hills Farm Park. This plan has been instrumental in shaping the stewardship of this key land area over the past two decades. However, much has now changed since the 2003 Plan was written.

In late 2022, the Council initiated a comprehensive review of the 2003 Plan, actively involving iwi, key stakeholders, and the wider community. This process has culminated in the development of this document that will serve as a strategic guide for the management of Wither Hills for the next ten years.

The Wither Hills Management Plan (Plan) includes an overview of the key values of importance to the community, issues identified through the consultation process, and the various outcomes sought from the Park.

Objectives, policies and actions have then been identified to provide a framework to support the achievement of each outcome area.

The Plan will provide the Council policy direction for day to day and longer-term management for the effective management of soil conservation and where possible, other outcomes such as biodiversity restoration and community use and enjoyment. It will also serve as a valuable resource document to inform the Council's Long Term Plan (LTP) and Annual Plan processes over the next 10 years.

A more detailed account of the key values, issues, feedback received, and consideration and assessment of policy options is provided in a separate document. The document does not form part of the Plan but is intended to provide more detail should readers seek further information about the policy development process.

### Legislative and policy context

#### Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty)

The Treaty is the founding document and foundation of this country. It binds the relationship between the Māori tribes and the Crown, that provided the opportunity for all people to live in New Zealand. Its purpose was for these distinct peoples to live alongside each other peacefully and with mutual respect and cooperation.

The Council has a variety of obligations to fulfil in relation to the Treaty including ensuring recognition, active protection and engagement on matters of importance.

The Waitangi Tribunal was established in 1975 to address past wrongs and historical grievances, resulting from the Crown dishonouring this agreement. This has seen iwi in our region sign settlement agreements addressing issues arising through historical land confiscations, and Government oppression.

## Te Tau Ihu Iwi Deeds of Settlement<sup>1</sup>

Deeds of Settlement provide formal recognition and acknowledgement of the values and aspirations of manawhenua iwi, through commercial and cultural redress and statutory acknowledgements for areas within respective rohe.

Rangitāne o Wairau, Ngāti Toa Rangatira and Ngāti Rārua Settlements recognise the area of land encompassing the Wither Hills being of importance, and place a variety of obligations on Council in managing this area.

## Local Government Act 2002 (LGA)

The Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) is the umbrella legislation for local authorities which has the essential purpose to “provide for democratic and effective local government that recognises the diversity of New Zealand communities”<sup>2</sup>. This includes promoting the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of communities in the present and for the future.

The LGA provides a framework and powers for local authorities to decide which activities they undertake and the manner in which they will undertake them. To balance this, the legislation promotes local accountability, with local authorities accountable to their communities for decisions taken. The LGA also includes provisions for local government to consult with Māori and involve them in decision-making processes.

Under the LGA, the Council is required to prepare a Long-Term Plan (LTP) that sets out the Council’s strategic directions and programs for the next 10 years.

The LTP describes what the Council plans to do over the next decade and how the Council’s activities will contribute to a range of community outcomes. The LTP sets out how much the Council intends to spend on its activities and services and how this will be funded.

<sup>1</sup> Rangitāne o Wairau Deed of Settlement (2010), Ngāti Toa Rangatira Deed of Settlement (2012), Ngāti Rārua Deed of Settlement (2014)

<sup>2</sup> Section 3, Local Government Act 2002

## Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act 1941

The overriding purpose of this Act is to make provision for the conservation of soil resources, the prevention of damage by erosion and make better provision for the protection of property from damage by floods.

## Reserves Act 1977

While most of the land comprising the Wither Hills Park is not subject to the Reserves Act 1977, the Council has opted to use the process provided for within the Act for the development of reserve management plans for the preparation of this Council policy document<sup>3</sup>.

## Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)

The purpose of the RMA is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources across the district.

RMA plans and policies to assist in achieving the purpose of the Act that include the Wither Hills are the Marlborough Regional Policy Statement, Wairau/Awatere Resource Management Plan (WARMP) and the proposed Marlborough Environment Plan (MEP).

The MEP was publicly notified in 2016 and is the culmination of a review of the WARMP and other resource management plans and policies for Marlborough. At the time of notifying the draft Plan, the MEP was not operative, although many of its provisions had effectively reached an operative status, including the zone rules for the Park.

Within the MEP, zoning, overlays and designations are used to control activities. A summary of those relevant for the Wither Hills is provided in Appendix 2.

The National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (NPSFM)<sup>4</sup> provides local authorities with direction on how they should manage freshwater under the RMA.

<sup>3</sup> Section 41, Reserves Act 1977

<sup>4</sup> <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/national-policy-statement-for-freshwater-management-2020-amended-february-2023/>

It seeks to ensure that freshwater is managed in a way that prioritises the health and wellbeing of water bodies, then the essential needs of people followed by other uses (Te Mana o te Wai).

One of the obligations arising from the NPSFM is the development of Freshwater Farm Plans under the Resource Management (Freshwater Farm Plans) Regulations 2020. These requirements will need to be met as part of any farm planning processes undertaken for the Wither Hills.

The National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (2023) provides direction to councils on how to identify significant natural areas and manage the adverse effects of new activities on them and requires councils to promote the restoration of indigenous biodiversity and indigenous vegetation cover.

### **Biosecurity Act 1993**

The purpose of the Biosecurity Act is to help keep harmful organisms out of New Zealand and to provide a framework for how we respond and manage them when they arrive and are naturalised.

One important element required under the Act is Regional Pest Management Plans (RPMP). The Council as a Unitary Authority has been developing and using these plans to guide biosecurity programmes throughout the district.

The current operative plan was produced in 2018 and contains policies and rules relating to several pest species within the Wither Hills including Chilean needle grass and nasella tussock.

### **Other Legislation/Strategies/Bylaws**

- Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014
- Marlborough Walking and Cycling Strategy 2019-29
- Reserves and other Public Places Bylaw 2017
- Responsible Camping Control Bylaw 2022
- Dog Control Bylaw 2021

An overview of the relevant legislation, statutory requirements, strategies and plans can be found in Appendix 2.

## **Review process**

The review process has broadly followed that provided for in the Reserves Act 1977. It included an additional pre consultation phase prior to formal notification of the Council's intention to review the management plan. It also included further direct discussions with key stakeholders following the first formal consultation round. A summary of the process followed is provided below:

- Late 2022: Pre consultation with Iwi and key stakeholders
- June 2023: Notification of intention to prepare a management plan and invitation for suggestions
- June / August 2024 – Draft management plan available for review and feedback via written submissions
- October 2024 – Hearings and consideration of submissions
- December 2024 – Final management plan adopted by Council.

Three Iwi participated in the review process (Rangitāne o Wairau, Ngāti Rārua, Ngāti Toa Rangatira). Staff and specialist consultants from several Council departments, the Wither Hills Farm lessee, representatives from the QEII National Trust, Department of Conservation (DOC), Fire and Emergency NZ and Walking Access NZ also provided valuable input.

Other key stakeholder groups directly consulted included:

- Rotary Clubs of Marlborough
- Marlborough Mountainbike Club
- Marlborough Landscape Group
- Marlborough Orienteering Club
- Marlborough Hang gliding & Paragliding Club.

The first community consultation round attracted ninety-two submissions, with many useful suggestions and insights considered as part of the plan development process.

The second community consultation on the draft Plan attracted XX submissions of which YYY were heard by the Council subcommittee of Councillors X, Y and Z on XX/YY/2024

A summary of the values and key issues identified is included in Parts C and D of the Plan. Further details of feedback received can also be found in the background document.

## Significant changes since 2003

Since the last management plan for the Wither Hills was adopted by Council, there have been a number of significant changes that will affect the management of the area into the future.

### Legislative

- Proposed Marlborough Environment Plan (notified 2016)
- Te Tau Ihu Iwi Deeds of Settlement (2014)
- National Policy Statement for Freshwater (2020)<sup>5</sup>
- National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (2023)<sup>6</sup>

### Environmental

- The area has been subject to more

extreme weather events, particularly droughts and floods and these events are likely to intensify and become more frequent into the future

### Operational

- The vulnerability of the Park to widespread severe erosion is increasing as old erosion protection works reach the end of their life
- Some of the tree plantings undertaken for soil conservation purposes are also reaching the end of their lives and will require replacement planting
- The surrounding areas have been subdivided for residential development creating increased cross boundary issues (reverse sensitivity)

### Social

- The Park now receives a significantly higher level of recreational use and an increase in other forms of recreation such as mountainbiking
- Greater community recognition of natural values and interest in how reserves are managed and in participation in restoration activities such as planting and pest trapping

<sup>5</sup> This Policy Statement and associated Regulations have been subject to some modifications during 2023 and are likely to be subject to further changes

in 2024.

<sup>6</sup> This Policy Statement and associated Regulations are likely to be modified in 2024.

## Principles

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There are several key principles that have been used in the development of objectives and policies within this Plan and which will be equally useful to guide other future management decisions. The principles set out below are not listed in any order of priority – all are considered to be important.

### Collaboration

- Working with others to achieve more

### Multiple Use

- Providing for a range of outcomes for the community, maximising benefits and minimising conflicts

### Sustainability

- Demonstrating best practice land management techniques in a dryland environment, with the preferential use of natural ecosystems where possible, to achieve enduring positive environmental and social outcomes

### Adaptability and resilience

- Being flexible and nimble in adjusting management practices to respond to changing circumstances

### Evidence based

- Ensuring actions are based on sound analysis using existing data and research, further informed by 'on the ground' observations

### Economic efficiency

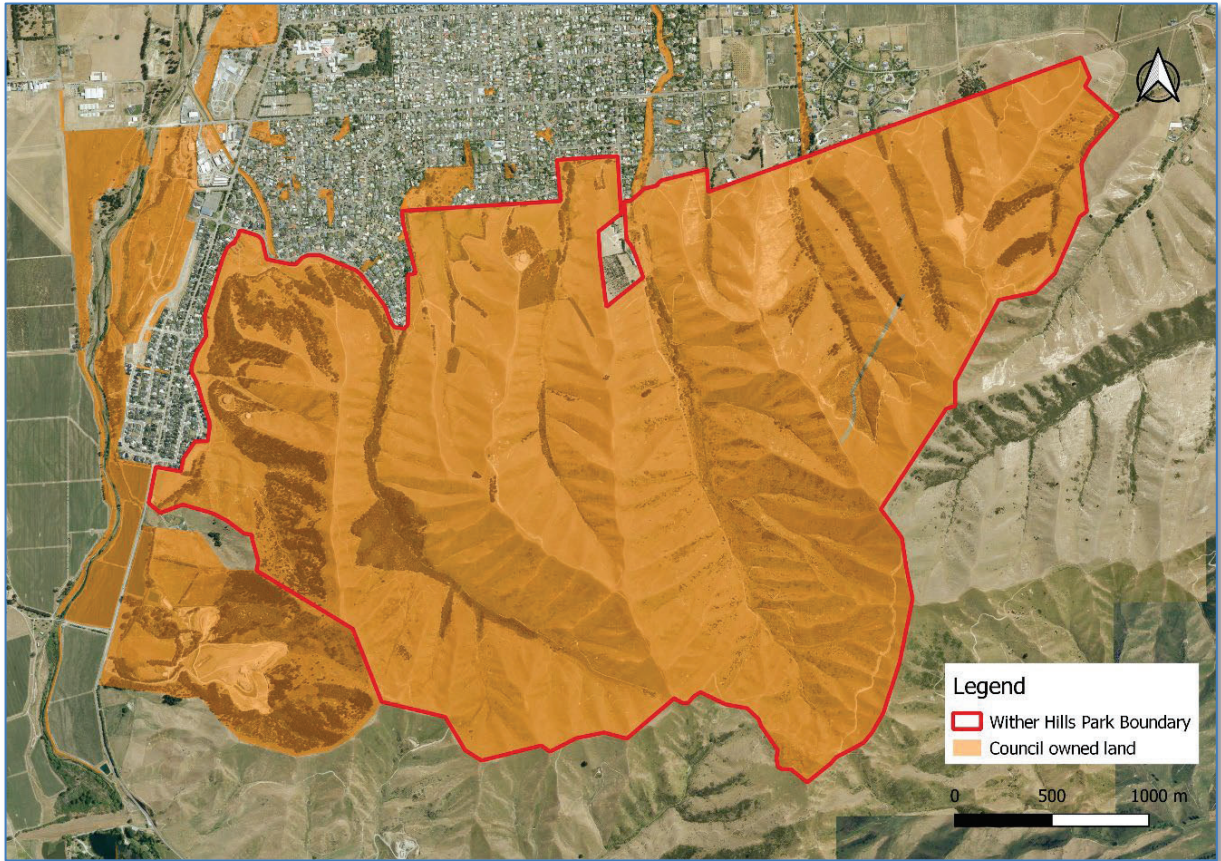
- Optimising use of resources and taking opportunities to develop and enhance economic activity that operationally and financially supports target outcomes being achieved



## Part B – About the Park

### Location, size, and legal status

The area of Council owned land subject to this Plan is 1029 ha covering the area shown below:



Map 1: Wither Hills Park Boundary

The Park adjoins Council land to the west, held for the purposes of landfill (Bluegums) and the Taylor River floodway. To the north, it borders various reserves including the Rifle Range Drain, George Young Reserve, Elmwood Avenue Reserve, Harling Park, Sutherland Stream Reserve and Dry Hills Lane.

There are several blocks and parcels of land that comprise the area covered by the Plan. Details regarding how the Council acquired the various areas and their legal descriptions are set out within the background document (Appendix 2). In summary the adjacent table describes the land areas.

Block	Legal description
Block A: Wither Run	Part Sec 2, Sec 8 SO 3776 Blk IV Taylor Pass SD Lot 609, 615 DP 409373 and Lot 630 DP 466163
Block B: Soil Conservation Reserve	Section 2 of 8 Blk IV, Taylor Pass Survey District.
Block C: Sutherland Stream	Lot 1 DP 8914 and Lot 1 DP 10763
Block D: Crown Rehabilitation Block	Lot 1 DP 2833
Block E: Part Bluegums Landfill Site	Part Lot 2 DP 9569
Block F: Part Sutherland Stream Reserve	Part Lot 12 DP 10374 Lot 1 DP 11209

While acquisition of much of the land was historically to enable management for soil conservation and flood control, more recent acquisition also took place for the purpose of establishing a regional landfill and to secure suitable flat land for future residential subdivision.

Much of the land comprising the Wither Hills Park is freehold Council owned land. There are two areas of land that are Crown owned land with management and control vested in the Council. There is also a small area of land encompassing the Redwood Street carpark and surroundings, which is within the Sutherland Stream Reserve and subject to the Reserves Act 1977.

A QEII National Trust Protective Covenant of 42 ha also exists on the eastern flanks of the Sutherland Stream valley. This has been in place since 1994, although the regenerating dryland kānuka ecosystem was severely damaged in the Boxing Day 2000 fire which significantly setback restoration of the site.

### Place in the landscape

The Wither Hills are located within the Wither Hills Ecological District. This area includes the eastern hill country between the Wairau Plain and the Awatere Valley, extending to the sea at Te Parinui o Whiti (Vernon Bluffs).

The area is dry, rugged, erosion prone hill country with steep gullies. Most of the area has lost its original forest cover and is used for agriculture, however remnants of native vegetation remain in places, such as on Te Hau /The Ned.

The Wither Hills catchment flows into streams and rivers (such as the Ōhine-anau-mate canal and Taylor River) which subsequently enter the Wairau Lagoon. The lagoon is of huge importance to manawhenua iwi and of wider national and international historic and ecological significance.

### Whakapapa / History

#### A Māori history of the area

At the time of European settlement, major Māori communities of Rangitāne, Ngāti Toa

and Ngāti Rarua lived at several pā near the mouth of the Wairau River.<sup>7</sup>

The ponds, marshes, lagoons, and tidal estuaries fed by the Wairau and Ōpaoa Rivers provided a rich food resource for these communities. Nineteen kilometres of hand dug canals and channels further enhanced opportunities for harvesting fish and birdlife from the area and provided improved transportation links. One of these canals which receives run off directly from the Wither Hills, the Ōhine-anau-mate canal, (or Co-op drain as it is incorrectly referred to), is of cultural and historical importance to manawhenua, given its hand dug origins.

The Wither Hills themselves were not extensively used by Māori, however there are two pits recorded from the area.

As part of the Te Taihū Treaty Settlement process finalised in 2014, Statutory Acknowledgements recognised these associations of Rangitāne, Ngāti Rārua and Ngāti Toa Rangatira with the Wairau River, its tributaries and the surrounds.

#### Rangitāne

*'The Wairau River and its environs was (and is) central to the identity and mauri of Rangitāne in the Wairau. Rangitāne have lived along the banks of the river since the arrival in the district of the tupuna Te Huataki. The area around the mouth of the river (the Wairau Lagoons) formed a particularly important occupation and mahinga kai area. The river in its entirety was a crucial source of mahinga kai and high-quality flax and was a major communications route.'*

#### Ngāti Rārua

*'The river as a source of water to Ngāti Rārua is paramount. The water resource sustains everything living around it, including the iwi. It is the mauri or lifeforce that has sustained and nurtured the Ngāti Rārua of Wairau for generations.'*

#### Ngāti Toa Rangatira

*'The Wairau River is of cultural, historical, spiritual and traditional significance to Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Ngāti Toa Rangatira have a longstanding association with the Wairau*

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.theprow.org.nz/maori/pa-and-kainga/>

*River as the Wairau and Cloudy Bay have been important areas of Ngāti Toa Rangatira settlement. since the 1830s.'*

### Other history

In 1944 the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Council commenced purchasing land on the Wither Hills to start addressing the significant soil erosion problems being encountered at the time on the loess soils of the southeastern hills of the Wairau Valley.

Numerous trials were undertaken during these early years using various tree and grass species, fertiliser application and mechanical treatments of the land.

Successful methods were then used from 1959 to treat over 3000 ha of private land in a programme known as the 'Withers Hills Catchment Control Scheme'. Further purchases of most of the northern facing slopes were also made by the then Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Council and the Crown and placed in public ownership.

This enabled rehabilitation of these eroded areas, reducing the long-term risk to the Blenheim urban area from erosion.

In 1993, the Council purchased the Sutherland Stream block, which completed the connection of all the north facing slopes, enabling the management of all areas to be combined and coordinated across the whole area.



## Part C – Values

### Climate

The main climatic characteristic of the area is its dryness, with frequent summer droughts accentuated by dry north-westerly winds. The climate is continental in character with warm dry summers and cool winters. Average annual rainfall is around 736mm per year<sup>8</sup>.

### Geology/Soils

The area is moderate to steep hill country comprising soils originating from gravelly conglomerate sedimentary materials and silt to fine sand textured material blown from glacial outwash sediments on the Wairau plains during late glaciation times.

Approximately half of the area comprises the gravelly Waihopai Soils, which tend to be located on lower elevation hilly and steep northerly facing slopes where there may have been minimal loess deposition common with other soils, due to exposure from strong winds. They are also extensive on higher elevation more southerly and easterly surfaces and ridges where there was probably little, or no loess deposited.

In contrast, Wither Soils, although less extensive, are a more dominant feature due to their upper layers being formed from loess which is highly susceptible to soil erosion.

This is due to a lack of vegetative cover increasing infiltration by water into subsoil fissures, concentrating run-off resulting in the distinctive and damaging tunnel gully erosion.

Vernon Soils are also present occurring over approximately 30% of the area. They are formed from a mixture of loess and gravels. They occur over a range of slopes but are more commonly located on the lower surfaces of the valleys and gullies, as well as on gully and valley head surfaces. Vernon soils also exhibit a high degree of instability with tunnel gully and to a lesser extent sheet erosion in places.

Waihopai soils typically tend to occur on one side of a gully with Wither soils and/or Vernon soils on the other side.

### Natural values

#### Vegetation

It is understood that the original vegetation cover of the Wither Hills was deforested by fire before European settlement. This would have been a forest dominated by lowland tōtara, mataī, black beech and kānuka in the lowlands, with Halls tōtara, red beech, kānuka and silver tussock on the higher ground. Flank and gully areas are likely to have contained *Muehlenbeckia complexa*, broadleaf, putaputawētā, akiraho, māhoe, five-finger, kōwhai and tītoki.

Dryer bluffs and rocky ground would have also supported *Coprosma propinqua*, *C. crassifolia*, matagouri and tauhinu.

The vegetation now predominantly contains exotic pasture grassland with exotic trees such as various species of Pine, Eucalyptus, Wattle, Tree Lucerne, Poplar and Willow, all used in places for erosion control.

Some of the valley floors and riparian areas have also been planted with native broadleaf species, tī kōuka/cabbage trees and harakeke/flax.

Plant pests such as Chilean needle grass, nasella tussock, broom, gorse and Old Mans Beard are present and subject to management programmes.

#### Wildlife

With the early loss of forest habitat and subsequent fire events through the area the diversity of native species is currently limited.

Piwakawaka/Fantail, Tūi and Tauhau /Silvereye, Korimako/Bellbird and Riroriro/ Grey Warbler and an occasional Harrier are present in the area in addition to introduced species California Quail. Chaffinch, Blackbird, Thrush and Skylark.

<sup>8</sup> Stats NZ (2013-2022)  
<https://www.stats.govt.nz/indicators/rainfall>

Pūkeko and paradise ducks also occur in wetter valley floor areas and NZ Grass skink in grassland areas throughout the Park.

Freshwater values are likely to be low given the dynamic nature of the watercourses and the amount of silt and sediment they regularly carry.

### **Cultural and heritage values**

Cultural and heritage values are generally low within the Park, however there are two historic pits recorded in the NZ Archaeological Association Register which are suspected to be of Māori origin.

The area also has a long history of pastoral farming which contributes to its heritage value.

### **Landscape values**

The Wither Hills are a prominent landscape feature behind Blenheim. Their distinctive golden undulating hills are mostly free from buildings with noticeably clear ridges and spurs.

While not valued by all members of the community given its extent of modification, the Marlborough Environment Plan (MEP) recognises this area as a High Amenity Landscape.



### Recreation values

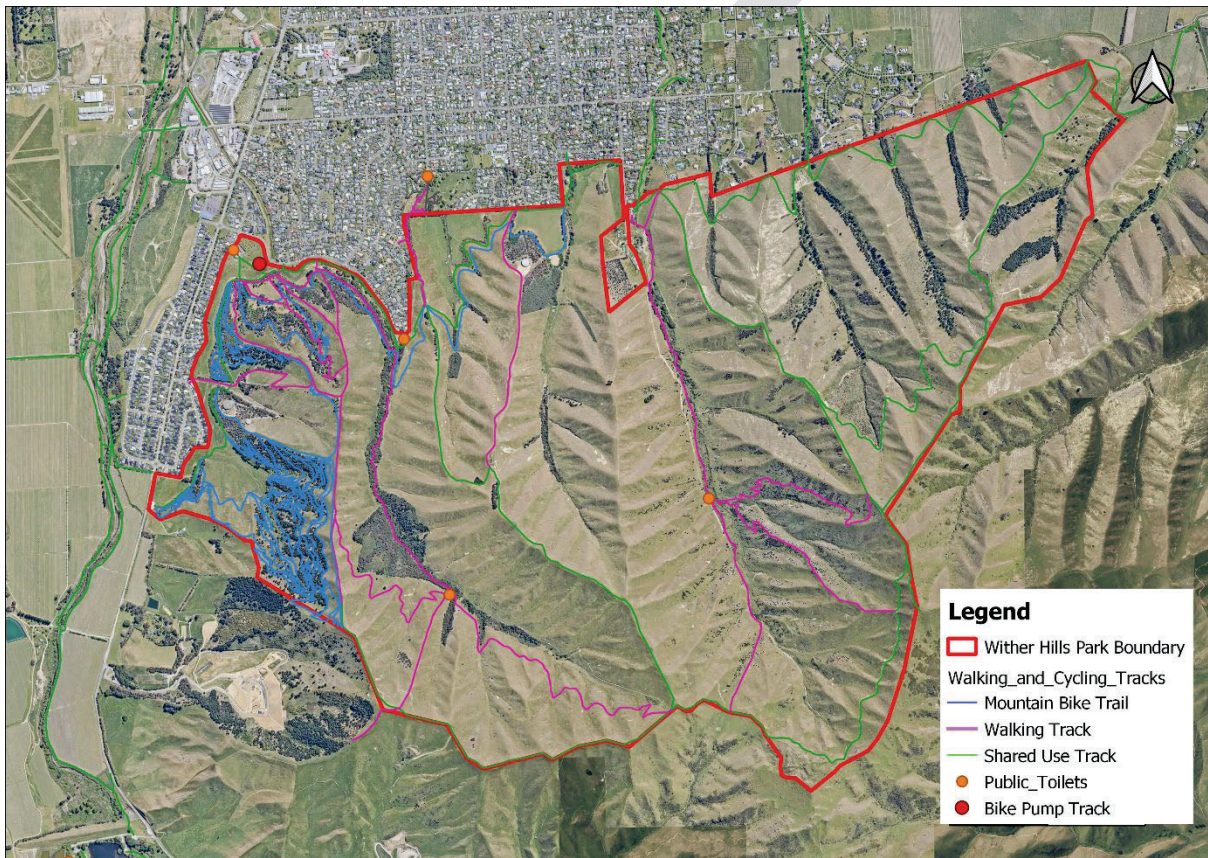
The Park is hugely valued by the community for the recreation opportunities that it provides for the residents of Blenheim, the wider district and for visitors.

These values are mostly in the form of opportunities for walking, running and biking but also in picnicking and passive enjoyment of this rural environment.

In total the Park currently provides 19km of walking tracks/routes, 26km of mountain

biking trails and 25km of shared use tracks, farm roads and routes. A summary of this network is shown below.

A variety of other facilities are provided to enhance visitor experience including wayfinding and information signs, carparks, seats and picnic tables, toilets and drinking fountains at entrances and at other key locations.



Map 2: Recreation Facilities

## Part D – Key Issues

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### How to continue to manage erosion

There is a history of widespread erosion from the Wither Hills resulting in large volumes of sediment to the floors of the gullies and out to the plains comprising the Blenheim urban area. This has occurred mostly during storm events. However, even during times of low flow, waterways adjacent to the hills have commonly been discoloured with silt and other sediments.

Significant progress has been made in stabilising areas of tunnel gully erosion and in reestablishing vegetation cover both prior to and following the Boxing Day 2000 fire.

However, the erosion risk remains a concern, particularly given the projected increased storm frequency and severity in future years.

Factors such as earthworks associated with further Park development (e.g. track construction, wildfires or an increase in rabbits or other pests or recreational activities that disturb the ground), may also threaten to exacerbate erosion within the Park.

### How to manage the risk from fire

Fire remains a significant risk to soil conservation and to the safety of users, workers and stock as well as to neighbouring properties.

Recent fire risk management modelling undertaken confirms the speed and severity of a fire occurring within the Park under high and extreme fire danger conditions.

Those that recall the Boxing Day 2000 fire will be aware of the risk that fire presents.

Increasing visitor use of the Park, in combination with a greater number of high fire danger days likely in the future makes it clear that fire risk management is a key area that needs to be addressed within the Plan.

### What to plant where

In early years, some of the plantings were experimental as to their effectiveness in achieving soil conservation objectives. There was also little consideration whether the

species used might create issues in other outcome areas (such as species being introduced that can spread and create weed issues or exacerbate fire behaviour).

Similarly, a method utilised to manage one outcome area for the Park have, on occasions, created issues for other areas (such as the retirement of land for planting comprising the viability of the farming operation).

An integrated approach to future planting plans will be needed to avoid these potential problems and ensure that planting undertaken supports and enhances all outcome areas.

### How to ensure a suitable range of recreational opportunities are provided

The Wither Hills has seen a significant increase in community use and enjoyment over recent years. The range of activities has also increased with mountain biking in particular experiencing increasing popularity. Demand for other recreational activities such as horse riding, dog walking or vehicular access also exists.

While the Park currently provides a range of recreational opportunities and associated facilities, it will be important for the Plan to consider whether any improvements are required, and whether these can be accommodated without compromising soil conservation objectives. Such improvements could include further capacity to accommodate increasing visitor user numbers, or an additional range of provision that better meet the needs, interests, and capabilities of visitors. It must also achieve this without adverse visitor experience or safety issues arising between different activities.

### Ensuring that farming is utilised effectively as a management tool

Farming has been used very successfully within the Park as a means of both managing grassland and the associated fire risk as well

as reducing erosion risk through building soil fertility and pasture cover. It has enabled an economic return from the land as well as a further point of interest and education for Park users.

The challenge for the Plan is to provide for a farming operation that best supports the achievement of target outcomes for the Park without significant negative effects and that as far as possible, an economically viable farming operation remains possible.

### **Working together with manawhenua iwi and the community**

Given the increased recognition and acknowledgment provided for within the

Te Taihū Treaty Settlements for manawhenua iwi, and the high and increasing level of community interest and use of the Park, it will be important that the Plan adequately provides for participation in planning and management of this key community asset into the future.





## Part E – Strategic Direction

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The Wither Hills are managed to provide for several different outcomes for the community. The primary purpose of soil conservation, for which the land was acquired by the Council, remains as strong as ever and it remains the overriding priority.

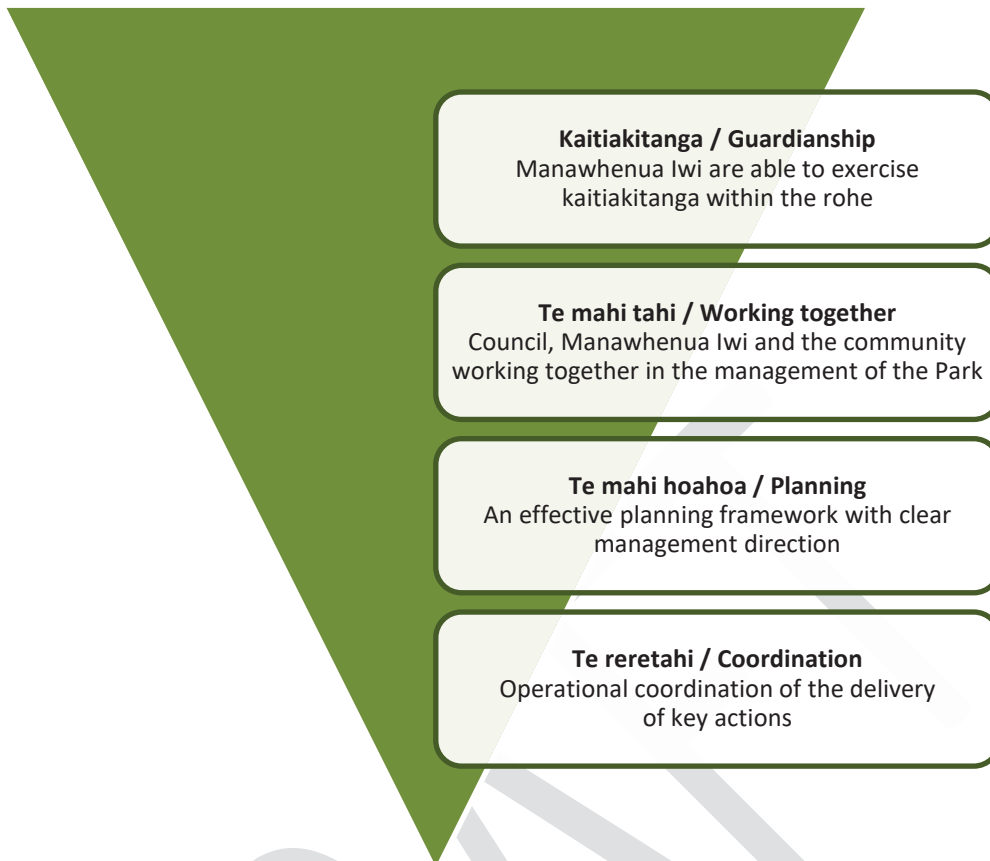
There are several other outcomes also desirable to maximise benefits for the community within the overriding soil conservation objective as shown below:



Of these, effective fire risk management is also of particular importance, given that it is critical to achieve soil conservation goals and to protect public safety.

While not considered a key outcome area, farming is an important management tool, which supports fire risk, vegetation management and weed control, as well as providing a farm experience for urban residents.

## What inputs are needed for effective management?



## What outcomes do we want to achieve?

The table below summarises the primary objective for each outcome area and the interrelated supporting roles required from other outcome areas:

Primary Outcome	Objectives	Supported by
<b>Soil conservation</b>	<p>Minimise soil erosion from hill slopes and along waterways by actively restoring and maintaining vegetative cover and controlling water flow.</p> <p>Manage activities such as grazing, earthworks and vegetation clearance.</p>	<p>Fire risk management</p> <p>Restoration of native habitats</p>

Secondary Outcomes	Objectives	Supported by
<b>Fire risk management</b>	<p>Reduce likelihood of fire ignition.</p> <p>Reduce the consequence of fire through early detection, fast and effective response, reduced rate of spread and fire intensity.</p>	<p>Soil conservation</p> <p>Restoration of native habitats</p>

Secondary Outcomes	Objectives	Supported by
	Minimise injury and asset damage, potential financial impacts and environmental damage. <sup>9</sup>	
<b>Recreational opportunities</b>	Provide for a range of recreational activities that can be accommodated without negatively impacting on other outcome targets or other users.	Soil conservation Restoration of native habitats Landscape protection
<b>Invasive species control</b>	Landowner obligations under the RPMP <sup>10</sup> are met and other invasive species are controlled to enable Plan objectives to be achieved.	Soil conservation Restoration of native habitats
<b>Restoration of native habitats</b>	Opportunities are taken in suitable locations to progressively restore natural habitats and enhance the mauri/life force.	Soil conservation Fire risk management Invasive species management
<b>Landscape protection</b>	The iconic and valued rural pastoral landscape is maintained while moving slowly towards a long-term vision of returning the Park to a dryland forest landscape.	Soil conservation Fire risk management Restoration of native habitats Invasive species management
<b>Cultural heritage protection</b>	Protect known sites of importance and share the whakapapa for the area.	Soil conservation Fire risk management Restoration of native habitats

The strategic direction to be achieved in each of these outcome areas is through implementing objectives and policies to guide the overall management of the Park. The directions also include a list of actions established to support implementation – see Part F of the Plan.

<sup>9</sup> Wither Hills Farm Park – Wildfire Risk Management Analysis May 2023.

<sup>10</sup> Regional Pest Management Plan

## Input Areas

### 1. Kaitiakitanga / Guardianship

#### Issues

Rangitāne, Ngāti Rārua and Ngāti Toa Rangatira have a cultural association with the Wairau River and its wider catchment.

The Wither Hills feeds tributaries of the Taylor River, Ōhine-anau-mate canal (Co-op Drain) and Ōpaoa River before entering the Wairau Lagoon. While these waterways are outside of the Park, they are of great historic significance to Iwi as sites for collection of food and other resources. The Ōhine-anau-mate canal is of particular significance, as an example of tūpuna canal building as a means of improving transportation links and to enhance food gathering efficiency.

The management of the Park has the potential to adversely impact these downstream areas of significance, including from sedimentation through erosion. Within the Park itself, there are also documented archaeological sites that indicate some historic use of these hills.

Despite this association, Iwi have had little opportunity to date to participate in decision making that may affect these valued areas.

#### Objectives

- 1.1 Manawhenua Iwi can exercise kaitiakitanga within their rohe.

#### Policies

- 1.1.1 Seek to ensure that environmental management policies and management activities enhance the mauri of the Park.
- 1.1.2 Provide opportunities to hui with manawhenua Iwi to regularly consider progress being made towards achieving the objectives, and to provide necessary further management guidance.
- 1.1.3 Ensure that consistent and accurate messaging around the cultural and historical significance of the Park to Rangitāne, Ngāti Rārua and Ngāti Toa Rangatira is included in

information signs and other communication channels.

- 1.1.4 Te Reo Māori to be used in conjunction with English on new signage and mapping.
- 1.1.5 Provide for customary harvest of plant material in accordance with tikanga subject to:
  - (a) The Rivers section of the Council being advised of when and where the cultural harvest will take place to ensure appropriate consideration is given to farming and soil conservation operations.
  - (b) Cultural harvest complying with the requirements of the Marlborough Environment Plan.

### 2. Te mahi tahi / Working together

#### Issues

Historically, most of the day-to-day management of the Wither Hills was undertaken by Council largely independent of community involvement.

This has changed with the steady development of recreational opportunities within the Park and increasing community support for environmental restoration. While relationships have emerged with some groups such as the combined Blenheim Rotary Clubs and the Marlborough Mountainbike Club, there is an opportunity to consider increasing and broadening relationships with these and other stakeholder groups, Iwi and the wider community.

#### Objective

- 2.1 The Council, Iwi, and the community work together in the management of the Park.

#### Policies

- 2.1.1 Provide opportunities and support initiatives for community participation in Park activities where

these are feasible, practical, and consistent with the Plan's objectives, policies, and actions.

- 2.1.2 Engage with Iwi and the wider community before making decisions that will affect the values or use and enjoyment of the Park.
- 2.1.3 Encourage and work with Iwi, the community and other volunteer groups who wish to work with the Council to:
  - (a) Develop and maintain appropriate recreation opportunities
  - (b) Enhance biodiversity health and resilience
  - (c) Improve the mauri of the Park.
- 2.1.4 Review communication channels to ensure efficient and meaningful information flow between Council and the community and that opportunities for feedback are provided.

### 3. Te mahi hoahoa / Planning

#### Issues

Given the importance of soil conservation and other activities within the Park, a framework for day to day and future management is critical to achieving objectives.

A Plan for the Park needs to reflect current circumstances and address current and future issues and provide an important link to the LTP.

Work programmes focused on delivering identified objectives also need to be in place and be informed by full information and necessary data.

#### Objective

- 3.1 An effective planning framework with clear management direction that can be practically implemented.

#### Policies

- 3.1.1 Develop and maintain a register of assets and values including regular condition and performance assessments to assist in asset management planning and the development of work programmes.
- 3.1.2 Collect necessary data on all Plan outcome areas to determine the success of actions and to guide future planning decisions.
- 3.1.3 Ensure that processes to assess future activities and development within the Park against Plan objectives and outcomes are in place.

### 4. Te reretahi / Coordination

#### Issues

As described, different departments of Council have different responsibilities within the Park. This has at times affected both efficiencies in delivering work, or the delivery of one work programme adversely affecting another.

#### Objective

- 4.1 Effective operational coordination of the delivery of key actions.

#### Policies

- 4.1.1 Formalise a Council staff group to coordinate necessary actions to implement the Plan.
- 4.1.2 Consider assigning a staff member for each important Wither Hills stakeholder relationship.
- 4.1.3 Ensure that the farm lease, operational contracts, or management agreements adequately reflect assigned responsibilities as well as health and safety, biosecurity and other statutory obligations.



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## Outcome Areas

### 5. Te whāomomo oneone / Soil conservation

#### Issues

While considerable progress towards controlling erosion and protecting soils has been made over many years, some problem areas remain, which will require ongoing active management. New areas of instability can also arise particularly following storms, fires, earthquakes and other events.

In addition, the whole area remains sensitive to activities undertaken on the land. Those that have the potential to adversely affect progress towards meeting soil conservation objectives will need to be managed to ensure that this does not occur.

#### Objectives

- 5.1 Minimise soil erosion from hill slopes and along waterways by actively restoring and maintaining vegetative cover and controlling water flow.
- 5.2 Manage activities such as soil disturbance, earthworks and vegetation clearance.

#### Policies

##### Soil conservation management

- 5.1.1 Develop and maintain a 10 year 'Soil and Water Management' work programme incorporating dryland management best practice, to be updated not less than three yearly and contain the following elements:
  - (a) Identification of sites where further soil conservation work is required and the actions necessary at these locations
  - (b) A description of ongoing Park wide soil conservation activities required including actions such as cross slope bulldozing, other earthworks, installation of debris and sediment control structures, soil testing, fertiliser and organic matter enhancement, pest and weed control necessary to maintain pasture, and any necessary

programmed resowing /oversowing

- (c) Current flood projections and any necessary channel water control maintenance /enhancement actions
- (d) Ensuring particular regard is had to waterways that flow into Ōhine-anau-mate canal and the Wairau Lagoon.

5.1.2 In conjunction with the farm lessee, develop a Farm Plan, incorporating the following requirements:

- (a) The management direction provided for within this Plan and any subsequent work programmes particularly those relating to soil conservation and fire risk management
- (b) The need for the Council and lessee to demonstrate dryland farming best practice
- (c) Any elements required under the Resource Management (Freshwater Farm Plans) Regulations 2020 or similar legislation that supersedes it
- (d) Necessary record keeping required to measure performance.

This Farm Plan should be reviewed annually to ensure that farming activities best contribute towards soil conservation and fire risk management. It should also be linked to an updated grazing lease.

5.1.3 Identify any specific tree planting requirements necessary for soil conservation over this period and incorporate these into the Planting and Vegetation Management Plan to be developed.

5.1.4 Identify any erosion control or stock management infrastructure necessary for soil conservation over this period and incorporate these into the Infrastructure Plan to be developed.

## Activity management

- 5.2.1 Incorporate any necessary soil conservation practices within work programmes for all existing activities undertaken within the Park that are provided for within this Plan.
- 5.2.2 Assess soil conservation impacts for all new planned or proposed activities or development within the Park. As part of this assessment, consider the degree of risk that the activity presents and any mitigation actions available. If high risk, seek geotechnical advice.

*Note: Key Assessment Criteria are provided in Appendix 4*

## 6. Te whakahaere tūraru ahi / Fire risk management

### Issues

The Wither Hills are particularly susceptible to fire. This is due to its location in an eastern dryland hill country pasture environment subject to windy conditions over the summer months, and potential ignition sources in the form of Park users, surrounding properties and arsonists.

Over the past 10 years several fire ignitions have occurred both within and outside the Park that have threatened public safety and damaged assets.

Over time, climate change will also increase the number of High and Extreme fire danger days for the Park, further raising this risk.

### Objective

- 6.1 Actively manage fire risk by:
- (a) Reducing likelihood of fire ignition
  - (b) Reducing the consequence of fire through early detection, fast and effective response, reducing rate of spread and fire intensity
  - (c) Minimising injury and asset damage, potential financial impacts and environmental damage.

## Policies

### Planning

- 6.1.1 Develop and maintain a Fire Plan (to be updated annually) to incorporate elements of fire risk management including, but not limited to:
- (a) Risk monitoring, review, and reporting
  - (b) Response to wildfire
  - (c) Activity and access restriction levels
  - (d) Communications and signage to ensure awareness of current risks and restrictions and to encourage 'Fire Smart'<sup>11</sup> actions by adjoining landowners
  - (e) Security and surveillance/early detection systems
  - (f) Fire Weather System and CIMS<sup>12</sup> training needs
  - (g) First responders site plan (access, water supplies etc.)
  - (h) Evacuation plan.

### Management

- 6.1.2 Identify vegetation management necessary across the Park to manage fire risk and incorporate this into the Planting and Vegetation Management Plan to be developed. Elements may include:
- (a) Tree removal and/or pruning
  - (b) Tree planting
  - (c) Use of summer greens<sup>13</sup> to replace pasture grass on Park margins
  - (d) Areas to be irrigated, grazed or mown.
- 6.1.3 Identify assets requiring maintenance or development to manage fire risks and incorporate these into the Infrastructure Plan to be developed. Elements may include:
- (a) Management tracks and roads, culverts, bridges

<sup>11</sup> Fire Smart: Campaign to encourage actions by landowners on the rural/urban interface to manage fire risks.

<sup>12</sup> Coordinated Incident Management System.

<sup>13</sup> May include species such as lucerne, chicory, plantain, ryegrass and clovers.



- (b) Water supply tanks, reticulation, ponds
  - (c) Helicopter landing sites
  - (d) Powerlines, yards, buildings
  - (e) Signs.
- 6.1.4 Identify recreation assets requiring maintenance or development to

manage fire risks and incorporate these into the Parks and Open Spaces asset management system and maintenance contract specification.

- 6.1.5 Maintain a process to enable a rapid, ready response to the closure of the Park when fire risk increases.



## 7. Ngā āheinga mahi ā-rēhia / Recreation opportunities

### General

#### Issues

The Park is hugely valued by the community and visitors as a location for a range of recreational activities. These opportunities contribute to the quality of life for residents of Blenheim and the wider Marlborough district.

The primary challenge is to ensure ease of access to the Park for visitors and a high quality experience while providing for a range of different types of recreational activities and capabilities to meet visitor needs.

While the recreational facilities currently provided are broadly appropriate and have been functioning adequately to date, there are several issues that need to be addressed within this Plan. These will become more important as the use of the Park continues to increase. These include:

- The need to ensure that the Park is accessible to people with a range of abilities

- Providing the right mix of facilities for users through a higher level of facilities close to Park entrances and a more remote experience further into the Park
- Ensuring different uses in the same location, such as mountainbiking and walking, do not create experience and safety issues
- Managing visitor access and facility development to ensure necessary farming operations are not affected
- Difficulties achieving other Park objectives – such as soil disturbance from track construction and increased fire safety risk resulting from public access
- Increasing community demand to provide for other activities
- New and emerging activities such as e - bikes, drones etc
- Inconsistent wayfinding and information signage as well as gaps in the provision of other supporting facilities (such as the lack of a toilet at the Redwood Street carpark)
- The need for current and future recreational use and associated facilities to not adversely affect the environment in other ways – such as through waste, physical damage or by visually detracting from the amenity values of the Park
- Ensuring that safety risks are managed, and easy access is available for emergency services and to identified AEDs<sup>14</sup>.
- The presence of the public within the Park also exacerbates fire risk both through potential ignition sources (arson and carelessness with cigarettes etc.) and the safety consequences of people potentially being in the path of a wildfire.

**Objective**

- 7.1 Provide for a range of recreational activities that can be accommodated without negatively impacting on other outcome targets or other users.

**Policies**

**Access and availability**

- 7.1.1 Ensure Park entrances are easy to find, use and meet the needs of a range of visitors.<sup>15</sup>
- 7.1.2 Where practical, ensure that visitor facilities are available in suitable locations to people of limited mobility.<sup>16</sup>
- 7.1.3 Hours of public use of the Park shall not be restricted unless required for:
- (a) soil conservation, farming or other management activities
  - (b) public safety
  - (c) security of Park assets
  - (d) management of special events.
- 7.1.4 All areas of the Park shall as much as possible remain available for public use and enjoyment unless restrictions are required for safety, to prevent adverse effects or to enable activities associated with farming operations or other management activities.
- 7.1.5 Designated areas within the Park shall be made available for organised recreational events or activities through the park bookings system.

**Safety and health**

- 7.1.6 Safety risks for visitors shall be managed and all facilities meet relevant statutory standards and where possible other ‘best practice’ standards<sup>17</sup>.
- 7.1.7 Provide/upgrade the network of emergency contact location bollards and access for emergency services.
- 7.1.8 Provide input to a Farm Plan to be developed, to ensure public safety risk and disturbance to the farming operation is minimised.
- 7.1.9 Retain the Smokefree status of the Park, with a prohibition on smoking and vaping discouraged to be implemented through appropriate signage.

<sup>14</sup> AED: Automated External Defibrillator

<sup>15</sup> Refer to Appendix 3 – Standards

<sup>16</sup> Refer NZS 4121:2001 Design for Access and

Mobility.

<sup>17</sup> Refer to Appendix 3 for key relevant standards.

- 7.1.10 In locations where people congregate,<sup>18</sup> a programme to actively provide and enhance shade, is developed.
- 7.1.11 Provide drinking fountains at primary and secondary entry points.<sup>19</sup> Phase out other drinking fountain provision within the Park.
- 7.1.12 Consider providing AEDs at key access points including Rifle Range and Redwood Street (Sutherland Stream) carparks.

Visitor infrastructure and experience

- 7.1.13 Ensure that the progressively rural/remote experience of the Park for users is protected and that all proposed new facility provision is assessed against this key management approach, which aligns with visitor needs.
- 7.1.14 Clear and consistent information signage is provided at entrance points and other key locations within the Park to provide visitors with all necessary information to support their visit.
- 7.1.15 Wayfinding signage shall be provided throughout the Park with information regarding permitted mode (bike or foot), distance, duration, difficulty, and required direction of travel (if relevant).
- 7.1.16 Education and interpretation signs about the natural landscape, culture and history of the Park shall be reviewed and enhanced in conjunction with manawhenua, technical specialists and community groups.
- 7.1.17 Park signs shall be designed and located to avoid adversely affecting amenity values.
- 7.1.18 Advertising signage may be approved within the Park subject to written authorisation at the discretion of Council. Consideration shall be given to:
  - (a) Whether signs are permanent or temporary
  - (b) Size, shape colour and placement

- and the effect on amenity values
- (c) The financial benefit that accrues to Council, or one of its partners, from the sponsorship sign.

- 7.1.19 Well distributed, easy to access seating with features to support those with limited mobility<sup>20</sup>, located to provide shade and pleasant views of the Park to enhance visitor experience.
- 7.1.20 Formal play facilities shall be restricted to the Rifle Range entrance.
- 7.1.21 A concession opportunity for a suitable relocatable food and beverage vendor at the Rifle Range entrance will be made available.
- 7.1.22 Ensure trees and planting that will enhance visitor experience is including within the Planting and Vegetation Management Plan to be developed. Priorities to include:
  - (a) Further development of exotic woodland on lower slopes
  - (b) Enhancement and expansion of native habitats (as identified in Section 10).

Environmental protection

- 7.1.23 Responsible environmental management practices by visitors shall be promoted through the following actions:
  - (a) Active use of the 'Environmental Care Code' and 'Tiaki Promise' on Park signage and through other information channels
  - (b) User responsibility for removal of rubbish through the existing 'pack it in pack it out' approach<sup>21</sup>
  - (c) Toilets to be provided at primary and secondary entry points<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Such as park entrances, picnic areas, play areas, pump track etc.

<sup>19</sup> Retain drinking fountains at Mountainbike, Rifle Range and Quail Stream entrances. Install drinking fountain at Redwood Street carpark.

<sup>20</sup> Including arm and back support, paved surface

from the path and to the side of the seating for wheelchair/mobility scooter/child stroller access.

<sup>21</sup> Ongoing effectiveness of the approach to be monitored and adjustments made or enforcement action taken.

<sup>22</sup> Refer Appendix 3.1 for entrance locations.

- 7.1.24 Motorised equipment such as generators is not permitted unless required for management purposes, or for special events authorised by the Council.

**Development**

- 7.1.25 New or replacement facilities and infrastructure shall be provided only where there is an identified need that enhances public use and enjoyment of the Park.
- 7.1.26 Any proposed recreational facility development shall thoroughly consider any potential effects on soil conservation objectives, amenity values, visitor remote experience, safety and other Park outcome areas.
- 7.1.27 Where possible, design and construction of new facilities shall retain a rustic/natural design theme that fits within the surrounding landscape.
- 7.1.28 Legal or nationally accepted best practice standards or guidelines for development of new tracks and facilities shall be followed.<sup>23</sup>
- 7.1.29 Plaques recognising the contribution by individuals or groups towards the development of the Park may be considered at the discretion of Council.

**Walking and running**

**Issues**

The primary consideration in providing for walking and running, is to ensure that there is a range of options available from each Park entry point that meet the needs of visitors of different abilities, available time and experience sought.

The other key issues are to ensure that walkers and runners have all the information and facilities that they require and that there are no safety issues, conflict with other users, or adverse effects on Park and farm operations from walking and running.

**Objective**

- 7.2 To provide a range of walking and running options for visitors with different abilities, available time and accessing the Park from different entry points.

**Policies**

- 7.2.1 Seek to provide access to high, mid, and low-level return loop walking options of different lengths and standards, from each entry point by:
  - (a) Undertaking analysis of the existing location and standard of dedicated walking tracks and shared bike/walking tracks
  - (b) Assessing connectivity and any new tracks or change in the standard of existing tracks required
  - (c) Using this information to develop a detailed capital development and maintenance plan.
- 7.2.2 Where necessary, any expansion needs for the track network will consider utilising existing formed tracks before undertaking new earthworks.

**Biking**

**Issues**

The Wither Hills Mountainbike Park is the most extensive off road cycling destination within the district, providing a range of experiences for riders. However, there is also an opportunity to make significant further improvements to the current network and supporting facilities.

At present the trails within the Park do not fully reflect the gradings identified by the Council on signs and in other public information. In a recent report commissioned by the Council, a significant undergrading was confirmed<sup>24</sup> (i.e., trails being of greater riding difficulty than signs and information channels suggest). The issue is that riders may attempt trails outside of their competency level with resulting satisfaction and potential safety implications. Common impediments for less able riders were also noted, including “the gates at the Park’s entry, the cattle stops and the need for turn radii on accessible trails to be much wider, at all grades.”

Nationwide, there is ongoing demand from the mountainbiking community to continue improving and enhancing provision.

<sup>23</sup> Refer to Appendix 3 for key relevant standards.

<sup>24</sup> Envisage NZ – 2023

Working bees to establish and enhance trails have become a core part of mountainbike club and enthusiast activity. While this is a great form of partnership with users, controls are required to ensure development does not compromise soil conservation and is orderly to achieve a coherent and functional network. Work must be undertaken safely and without adversely affecting other uses or key outcomes sought for the Park. Unauthorised trail construction also regularly occurs and is of particular concern.

Control of grass and other fuels to manage fire risk has been an ongoing issue for the Mountainbike Park area. For most of the Park, grazing is used to manage pasture and grass areas. However, grazing within the Mountainbike Park has been limited in the past due to a concern regarding damage to trails and perceived safety issues. This has resulted in long grassland and weed issues in this area and a corresponding increase in fire risk.

E-bikers are now a considerable proportion of mountainbike trail users. Adjustments to existing trail provision may be required to better suit this increasing use. This may include adjustments to the range, grade, and length of trails.

The other key issues are to ensure that bikers have all the information and facilities that they require, and that there is no conflict with other users or adverse effects on Park and farm operations.

- (d) An analysis of the existing location and standard of dedicated mountainbike tracks and shared bike /walking tracks outside of the Mountainbike Park is also undertaken
- (e) Programmed actions do not adversely affect wider Plan objectives, particularly soil conservation, fire risk management and other recreational use and development
- (f) The views, preferences and expertise of the Council, its contractors, the Mountainbike Club and other users are considered.

7.3.2 Ensure that clearly defined management agreements (or similar) are in place for any authorised activity or works within the Park by the Mountainbike Club or any other third party.

7.3.3 Discourage unauthorised trail construction or other works through an active communication programme and where necessary enforcement action.

7.3.4 Undertake regular condition and performance assessments on the trail network, monitor feedback and adjust the work programme as required.

**Objective**

7.3 To provide a range of biking options for users with different abilities and available time.

**Policies**

- 7.3.1 Develop a work programme to identify further development and improvements to mountainbiking opportunities within the Park. This work plan must ensure that:
- (a) The overall objective for biking with the Park is met
  - (b) Sufficient resourcing is in place to maintain existing trails before new trail development is considered
  - (c) Development meets nationally recognised standards and best practice

**Dog walking**

**Issues**

Dog ownership in Blenheim and the wider district has increased significantly since 2003. This trend has continued in recent years. This has resulted in an increased demand for locations to exercise dogs.

While all areas of public land should be considered for their suitability for use for dog walking these should be restricted as required to protect safety and experience of other users and the environment. Dogs can also detract from the visitor experience or create safety concerns for non-dog owners wishing to have places to not have to interact with dogs.

For the Wither Hills, there are ongoing challenges with operating a working farm immediately adjacent on the urban area of

Blenheim. Of particular concern is the chasing, injuring, and killing of livestock by dogs.

### Objective

- 7.4 Ensuring adequate dog exercising opportunities are available beyond the boundaries of the Park.

### Policies

- 7.4.1 Promote the existing 2021 Dog Control bylaw dog prohibition within the Wither Hills Park through:
- (a) Information provided on signs and other information channels
  - (b) Enforcement actions as necessary.

### Motorised vehicles

#### Issues

The popularity of motorised recreational vehicles, such as four wheel drive vehicles, motorbikes and quad motorbikes, has increased significantly over recent years. This has generated further demand for more locations to be made available to use these vehicles. It has also created safety and environmental damage issues where they have been used in inappropriate locations around the district.

Motorised vehicles do enable however, access to locations that might be challenging or impossible for people to access and enjoy in any other way, such as the aged or disabled.

#### Objective

- 7.5 Access by motorised vehicles is controlled to prevent adverse effects on soil conservation, farm operations or other Park users.

#### Policies

- 7.5.1 Recreational motorised vehicle access, (excluding e-bikes as defined by regulation or notice under the Land Transport Act 1998<sup>25</sup>) within the Park shall not be permitted without authorisation.
- 7.5.2 Limited vehicle access on Cob Cottage Track from Cob Cottage Road to the airstrip/lookout by permit for one off

events by organised groups or seasonal use by recreation concessionaires may be permitted subject to:

- (a) Confirmation that existing easements provide for this activity
- (b) Controls to the number and type of vehicles, timing of visits and frequency of use
- (c) Necessary health and safety systems being in place and actively managed
- (d) The ability to cancel any permit or recreation concession in the periods of elevated fire risk, or if unacceptable adverse effects on other Park outcomes or other utility providers' result
- (e) Any other terms and conditions considered necessary.

### Horse riding

#### Issues

Horse riding is currently not provided for within the Park, despite an extensive area of farmed land potentially suitable for this purpose and active community demand for greater access.

However, horses are potential vectors in the spread of pests such as Chilean needle grass both through picking up unwanted seed in hooves or hair and returning to an environment where spread may occur.

#### Objective

- 7.6 Opportunities for horse riding are considered within the context of ensuring soil conservation, biosecurity and wider Park outcomes can be met.

#### Policies

- 7.6.1 Council will consider providing for horse riding access on an annual, one-off event, or set frequency basis subject to:
- (a) Ensuring that any allocated area is not within a known recorded Chilean needle grass site and that the event is held outside of the main seeding period<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Power -assisted Cycles (Declaration Not to be Motor Vehicles) Notice 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Usually October – January

- (b) Controls to the number of horses and timing of event
- (c) Controls to ensure farm operations are not adversely affected
- (d) Necessary health and safety systems in are place and are actively managed
- (e) Compliance with the rules of the Council's RPMP
- (f) The ability to cancel any such event in a period of elevated fire risk or if unacceptable adverse effects on other outcome objectives for the Park
- (g) Any other terms and conditions considered necessary.

### Recreational use of aircraft (paragliding, hang gliding, drones, helicopters)

#### Issues

Hang gliding/paragliding has been provided for within the 2003 Plan, however the activity has rarely occurred, primarily due to access being more challenging and that the site is within controlled airspace due to its proximity to the Omapa and Woodborne airfields.

The use of helicopters for transport of people to highpoints as a feature of events such as significant birthday, wedding or to transport walkers or mountainbikers has become more common in recent years. A policy regarding one-off helicopter landings is therefore required.

Similarly, the use of drones has become increasingly popular in recent years. While drones provide much entertainment and photo opportunities for users, they can be a safety risk to other aircraft and users, may have implications for stock as well as detracting from the visitor experience. The CAA is the primary agency responsible for managing the use of drones, permission from Council as owner and manager of the Park is required for any drone use in this area (in addition to any CAA/Airways Corporation approvals).

#### Objective

- 7.7 To control the use of aircraft to protect the peaceful rural values of the Park and minimise impacts on farming operations.

#### Policies

- 7.7.1 The use of paragliders, hang gliders and helicopter landings in the Park may be permitted with approval subject to:
  - (a) Compliance with relevant safety standards and any other legislative requirements relating to their activity
  - (b) Controls to the location of take-off and landing areas, timing, and frequency of use to avoid or minimise impact other users and livestock
  - (c) The ability to cancel any permit or recreation concession in the periods of elevated fire risk, or if unacceptable adverse effects on other Park outcomes result
  - (d) Any other terms and conditions considered necessary.
- 7.7.2 The use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (drones) shall be provided for in the Wither Hills by special permission in accordance with the existing Council policy. Safety, privacy, disturbance effects on others as well as compliance with other necessary statutory requirements<sup>27</sup> will be considered prior to any permission being granted.

#### Hunting

##### Issues

Hunting has historically not been permitted within the Park, therefore there have been few issues with the use of firearms. Similarly trapping or poisoning of game animals has been limited to Council as manager of the Park.

##### Objective

- 7.8 The suitability of the Park for recreational hunting is considered in the context of other land use and management needs.

<sup>27</sup> CAANZ Rule Parts 101 and 102, Privacy Act 1993.

## Policy

- 7.8.1 Hunting of any kind or the use of firearms or other weapons is not permitted within the Park, unless authorised by Council for management purposes.

## 8. Te tāmi momo rāwaho / Invasive species control

### Issues

There are obligations contained within the Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP) for species that occur within the Wither Hills. The Council, as landowner and manager, needs to ensure compliance with these rules and preferably also to role model best biosecurity practice to the wider community

Species of note where rules apply include:

- Nasella tussock
- Chilean needle grass
- Broom (Good neighbour rule)
- Gorse (Good neighbour rule)
- Rabbits.

Other invasive species also threaten the ability for wider Plan outcomes to be achieved. These include threats to:

- Grazed grassland environment – affecting soil conservation and fire outcomes. (broom, gorse, barberry, rabbits, and various pasture weeds).
- Woodland and native restoration areas – affecting native restoration and landscape outcomes (Old Mans Beard and other climbing weeds, Himalayan honeysuckle, tree weed species including planted Corsican pine, Scots pine, Radiata pine, wattle, crack willow, grey willow, spindleberry, barberry, boxthorn, elderberry, briar, cotoneaster, pampas and exotic grass affecting natural regeneration). In addition, animal pests including rabbits, possums, mustelids (stoats, weasels, ferrets), rats and cats either browse establishing native vegetation or predate native wildlife.

Other species such as magpies are an increasing problem, affecting both public safety as well as native wildlife. Unlike in some areas, introduced wasps are not currently a major issue. Hares, deer, and pigs do occur from time to time but are also not currently a significant threat.

### Objective

- 8.1 Landowner obligations under the RPMP are met and other invasive species are controlled to enable Plan objectives to be achieved.

### Policies

- 8.1.1 Maintain and annually review the work programme for nasella tussock and Chilean needle grass in conjunction with Council Biosecurity staff that meets statutory and biosecurity best practice.
- 8.1.2 Provide information for a Farm Plan to be developed in conjunction with the Farm leaseholder including:
- (a) Key invasive species that threaten grazed grassland
  - (b) The relative threat they present, and options to undertake control if required
  - (c) RPMP land occupier/stock movement controls in place
  - (d) Responsibility between Council as landowner/manager, and the leaseholder to undertake required work (considering the existing lease provisions).
- 8.1.3 Provide information for a Planting and Vegetation Management Plan to be developed including:
- (a) Key invasive species that threaten existing or establishing native revegetation<sup>28</sup> or exotic woodland areas
  - (b) The relative threat they present and options to undertake control if required
  - (c) Existing planted tree species that should be removed<sup>29</sup> and not be used in any future planting programme as they present a weed

<sup>28</sup> Including the Sutherland Stream QEII Covenant

<sup>29</sup> Such as Corsican pine



threat.

- 8.1.4 Continue or consider commencing control of other pest species that may present wider public safety concerns such as magpies or introduced wasps.
- 8.1.5 Ensure necessary hygiene processes and systems are in place to prevent exacerbating the negative effects from invasive species including:
- (a) Ensuring contracts, leases, licences, and management agreements contain hygiene measures such as the RPMP requirement for vehicle and machinery cleaning and inspection
  - (b) Ensuring appropriate signs are in place at entrances communicating any key biosecurity messages
  - (c) Considering installation of bike /footwear cleaning stations at key entrance points such as Rifle Range and the Mountainbike Park carpark.

## 9. Te whakaora i ngā taiao māori / Restoration of native habitats

### Issues

There is a strong desire from manawhenua and the wider community to enhance and expand the currently limited areas of native biodiversity restoration. This is an opportunity to further this objective while also satisfying necessary soil conservation and fire risk management objectives.

Kānuka as a key primary coloniser and succession species is a key to restoration in this area. When distributed within paddocks, kānuka can also be beneficial in positively influencing green dry pasture production compared to open pasture positions<sup>30</sup>. However, it also presents a higher fire risk than other native species and should be supported to transition to less flammable broadleaf forest as quickly as possible.

The approach to planting and restoration for the Park will need to consider these and other dynamics in species selection.

Restoration areas such as the Sutherland Stream QEII covenant have faced a variety of pressures over many years including:

- Significant damage by the Boxing Day 2000 fire
- Pasture grasses over sown to stabilise areas of erosion but also restricting natural regeneration of kānuka and other native species
- Stock accessing and grazing regenerating or planted areas.

As far as possible, the management of future pressures will need to be incorporated into restoration planning.

### Objective

- 9.1 Opportunities are taken in suitable locations to progressively restore natural habitats and enhance the mauri/life force.

### Policies

- 9.1.1 Provide information for a Planting and Vegetation Management Plan to be developed that identifies:
- (a) Existing native habitats and areas of restoration plantings requiring further protection and enhancement or expansion
  - (b) New areas, such as incised valleys, riparian margins and S and SE facing flanks, suitable for transitioning from exotic woodland or farmland to native habitat restoration area.
- Actions recommended may include:
- (c) Utilising sites that link native ecosystems through corridors or 'stepping stones'
  - (d) Increasing the size of protected areas by moving/upgrading fences to prevent stock access (Infrastructure Plan)
  - (e) Retaining existing exotic tree cover

<sup>30</sup> McKay Smith, Burkitt, Lopez, Reid. Massey

to maintain soil stability, provide shelter and suppress weed growth until plants are established

- (f) Where possible, encouraging natural regeneration of kānuka or other native species (with fencing and the support of tree lucerne or the release spraying of pasture grass if appropriate) and fencing
- (g) Infilling of gaps and over time replacing exotic trees with appropriate indigenous species
- (h) Mulching tree debris arising from fire risk reduction maintenance to provide nutrients for the plants and more rapid decomposition of potential wildfire fuel
- (i) Commencement of, or increased pest and weed control, to ensure survival of establishing plants and returning wildlife.

9.1.2 In accordance with the 1997 Sutherland Stream Open Space Covenant (Wither Hills Farm Park) Management Statement, the Covenant area shall be managed to ensure:

- (a) All indigenous vegetation is protected
- (b) The natural regeneration of native species will be allowed to continue
- (c) Any new plantings are of native species from locally sourced stock<sup>31</sup>
- (d) Weed control (including introduced pasture grasses) is undertaken where necessary to encourage natural regeneration
- (e) Fencing is maintained to a stock proof condition and that stock are not able to access the site
- (f) Animal pest control is undertaken where values are threatened and a sustainable programme is possible.

## 10. Te tiaki horanuku / Landscape protection

### Issues

The Wither Hills are a well-known iconic landscape feature that dominates the skyline of Blenheim and the surrounding Wairau Valley. Land use activities are highly visible and affect the resulting landscape values that the Park provides. There is the need to maintain the current landscape vista valued by so many residents while at the same time providing for a slow transition towards the restoration of the original dryland forest cover and over the long term, a different landscape.

The Park also provides for visitors to enjoy the various landscapes within the Park, which while dominated by farmed hill country, also includes exotic forest woodland, sites for native restoration and various tree plantations. Getting the mix of these various land uses right to meet a range of outcomes and satisfy visitors and the wider community, is a key challenge.

Views from the Park to the surrounding area and beyond to the Marlborough Sounds, Cloudy Bay and the North Island are also highly valued and need to be maintained.

### Objective

- 10.1 The iconic and valued rural pastoral landscape is maintained while moving slowly towards a long-term vision of returning the Park to a dryland forest landscape.

### Policies

- 10.1.1 Ensure effects on landscape values are considered prior to any of the following development activities occurring:
  - (a) Planted vegetation – avoiding further tree plantations with ‘hard edges,’ concentrating development of woodlands or native forest restoration areas to lower slopes, valley floors and lower flanks (rather than ridges and high elevations)
  - (b) Built Environment – locating infrastructure discretely away from highly visible sites or

<sup>31</sup> From within the Wairau Ecological Region

limit significant developments to locations where existing built features exist.

- 10.1.2 Ensure landscape effects of planting exotic or native vegetation are considered in the development of a Planting and Vegetation Management Plan.

## 11. Te tiaki i ngā taonga tuku iho / Cultural heritage protection

### Issues

The wider Wairau catchment, including the Wither Hills, are of cultural spiritual historical and traditional importance to several Te Taihū iwi including Rangitāne, Ngāti Rārua and Ngāti Toa Rangatira. While most sites of significance occur below the Park (such as the Ōhine-anau-mate canal and wider Wairau Lagoon area) there are also several recorded pits within the Park

boundaries that are not well known to Park managers or the wider community.

### Objective

- 11.1 To protect known sites of importance and share the whakapapa for the area.

### Policies

- 11.1.1 Ensure the historic pit locations are well known to Council staff and the farm manager, so these are not damaged through any Park management or development activities.
- 11.1.2 Work with manawhenua to determine whether wider identification of the historic pits and any known whakapapa is communicated to visitors by appropriate signage.



## Other areas

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### 12. Te tūāhanga / Infrastructure

#### Issues

There are several issues associated with Park infrastructure. Most of these are historical due to somewhat ad hoc management practices, poor or non-existent asset management processes, damage from fire as well as outside effects from the subdivision and urbanisation of the surrounding area.

Infrastructure specifically managed for recreation purposes has less of these described issues and has been considered within the recreation section of this Plan.

#### Park infrastructure

##### Water supplies

The primary water supply for the Park is from the Blenheim town supply. While this is adequate for day-to-day use, it is not assessed as sufficient if irrigation of a summer greens buffer strip or similar, was a preferred option for the urban rural boundary.

A connection to the Southern Valleys irrigation scheme<sup>32</sup> is available, however this would require a connection to be made with the pipeline located on the west side of the Taylor River.

A water supply from the Bluegums landfill has also been reconnected, which has allowed grazing to recommence on the upper flanks of the landfill property.

The other water supply source for the Park is the Cob Cottage/Wither Hills Water Supply. This supply was originally established in the 1970s to support the management of soil conservation and grazing of the Wither Hills. However, it has increasingly been used by subdivided lifestyle block properties (both formally and informally) resulting in a loss of supply for Park locations more remote from the pump.

The supply was also damaged in the Kaikoura earthquake with the supply currently being fed from the nearby town supply. There are also issues associated with the resource consent for the water take, easements for access, new water quality standards for domestic supplies and the implementation of a cost distribution model for users<sup>33</sup>. The scheme is currently under review by the Council.

Within the Park a functioning water supply network does exist, however the inventory of components is incomplete, condition assessments are not undertaken with repairs and maintenance undertaken solely on a reactive basis. Further improvements to the current network will also be needed and require identification within work programmes.

##### Buildings and structures

The maintenance responsibility for buildings falls with the farm lessee, however the Council has recently done some upgrade work on the farm manager's residence. This has provided a much needed improvement in the condition of the house, however further maintenance is likely to be required in the future.

Most farm buildings are in good condition except for the woolshed, which is in very poor condition and needs replacing if sheep grazing remains a core element of the farming operation. Any new facility would need to have a drenching and drafting facility underneath, however covered yards would not be required.

##### Fencing

There is a huge amount of fencing maintenance required within the Park as well as some reinstatement of new fencing because of historic fire damage.

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<sup>32</sup> The allocation available is 18m<sup>3</sup>/Ha/day for properties within the scheme.

<sup>33</sup> The supply is currently funded through general rates despite installed water meters.

There are also several fencing improvements that would allow for an improvement in the way that the land is farmed. In addition, as areas are retired for biodiversity and planting expansion, new fences will also be required.

The fence inventory is incomplete and it lacks current condition information. This makes it difficult to effectively prioritise maintenance and replacement needs.

### Management and farm access/roading

In general terms these assets are well known and adequately managed. Given the potential effect that these assets can have on soil conservation by concentrating water flow through water tables and culverts, it is important that the inventory and condition assessments for this asset group are kept up to date. There are also improvements that can be made to ensure easier access by emergency service vehicles, both in terms of the physical condition of roads and available information for first responders.

### Fire infrastructure (ponds, hydrants, dedicated tanks, fire breaks etc.)

This infrastructure has historically not been inventoried or been subject to condition assessments, however as recommended by the recent Fire Risk management report, this is important.

### Soil conservation infrastructure (dams, water control structures, stop banks)

Soil conservation assets have historically not been inventoried or been subject to condition assessments. This crucial information will help ensure assets that fulfil an important soil conservation function, are adequately maintained and replaced when necessary, so they continue to operate effectively.

### River management infrastructure (intake structures)

Several stream/stormwater intake structures occur within the lower slopes of the Park. These are included within the Council's GIS and Asset Management System and are maintained by the Rivers Section.

### Other wider community infrastructure

This infrastructure is managed as part of wider Council networks:

- Water Supply (3 reservoir tanks plus a small pump station)
- Wastewater – pipe from the landfill around towards the Mountainbike Park taking leachate back to the Blenheim wastewater system
- Stormwater – Harling Park detention area and stormwater intake, and swale western side of Redwood Street
- Telecommunications sites – various sites up Cob Cottage track.

Implications for Park management include the need to ensure access is available and not restricted due to surrounding land use, and that other activities within the Park do not damage these assets.

As Blenheim continues to grow, demand for additional facilities will inevitably arise and will need careful consideration against Plan objectives.

### Objective

- 12.1 To ensure that sufficient and appropriate infrastructure is in place, and maintained over time, to support the achievement of objectives and Plan outcomes.

### Policies

- 12.1.1 Asset management practices will be introduced to the management of Park infrastructure to ensure necessary assets are in place to support the achievement of Plan outcomes. These include:
- (a) Assessment of desired levels of service
  - (b) A complete inventory of assets (and a process to update this)
  - (c) Regular condition assessments.
- 12.1.2 An Infrastructure Plan/Work Programme will be developed to identify a thorough and effective Capital, Renewals and Maintenance programme for a variety of Park assets including:
- (a) Water supply assets (pipes, tanks, troughs, pumps)
  - (b) Buildings and structures (houses, sheds, farm buildings)

- (c) Fencing assets (fences, walls, retaining walls)
- (d) Roading assets (roads, drains, culverts, bridges)
- (e) Fire assets (ponds, firebreaks, tanks hydrants, helipads, fire signs)
- (f) Soil conservation assets (dams, water control structures, stop banks)
- (g) Stormwater assets (intake structures).

12.1.3 Proposals for additional community infrastructure, (such as telecommunications sites or reservoirs etc.) will be considered, taking into account the effects on other outcomes, including on the protection of landscape values.

The review of existing mechanisms, to minimise reverse cross boundary effects, and the consideration of any new actions is required.

One such existing tool has been the construction of a fence located within the Park, rather than on the legal boundary, to create a buffer strip. These are of different widths<sup>35</sup> as they were established at different times. Various property owners have inappropriately utilised this Council owned strip locating buildings, structures, and vegetation along this margin. Most of these encroachment issues have been addressed over recent years, however they continue to arise from time to time and need to follow a clear process to resolve.

The Bluegums landfill also directly adjoins the Park. The land comprising the landfill currently includes both operational and non-operational areas with final closure scheduled for 2047<sup>36</sup>. This boundary creates its own risks and opportunities between these land uses. These need to be considered and included within policies within this Plan and those that apply to the landfill site. Specific issues to address include:

## 13. Ngā rohe tauārai o te pāka / Park boundaries

### Issues

Much of the northern and western sections of the Park boundary directly adjoin residential areas. This creates 'reverse sensitivity'<sup>34</sup> issues between the preexisting rural land use and the more recent residential development. Such issues can occur in either direction:

#### Residential areas

- Noise disturbance from mowing or other machinery use
- Landowner health concerns regarding effects from fertiliser, lime, or herbicide applications adjacent.

#### Park

- Source of fire from backyard burning/barbeques, fireworks etc.
- Source of weeds from garden escapes
- Access from uncontrolled dogs or cats carrying toxoplasmosis (that can be passed on to livestock).

- The active management of fire risk at the landfill site such as fire breaks, immediately available firefighting resources and ease of access for FENZ on arrival
- The need for planting and revegetation planning and work undertaken at the landfill site to align with Park objectives for fire risk management, soil conservation, restoration of native habitats as well as landscape protection
- The opportunity for additional public access (and emergency egress) through the landfill site.

While the overall perimeter of the Park and its boundary is well established, there are several locations where this boundary could be improved by further land purchase. Undertaking the process to identify such areas in advance of any opportunities, arising is also considered worthwhile.

<sup>34</sup> 'Reverse sensitivity – the sensitivity of an established activity to objection from new sensitive land uses nearby.

<sup>35</sup> Up to 10m on the northern boundary and 1m on the western boundary

<sup>36</sup> Resource consent renewal is also required in 2030.

**Objective**

13.1 Ensure that the interface between the Park and surrounding private land is located and managed to support Plan outcomes being achieved and to reduce negative cross boundary effects.

(b) Where removal and reinstatement does not occur, then the Council undertake this work and seek to recover costs.

**Policies**

13.1.1 Continue to activity manage urban interface buffers by:

- (a) Maintaining the existing fenceline located within the Park boundary
- (b) Maintaining a mowing strip between the fenceline and property boundary
- (c) In conjunction with property owners ensuring this strip remains clear of structures and flammable vegetation
- (d) Aligning width of buffer strip to a minimum of three metres.

13.1.3 Ensure other departments of Council managing land adjacent to the Park (such as Solid Waste) are included in any decision-making processes that have cross boundary effects between the Park and Bluegums landfill.

13.1.4 Council actively considers where strategic land acquisition opportunities exist and that these are actively pursued by purchase or by entering into 'Right of First Refusal' agreements.

13.1.2 Actively monitor and respond to Park encroachment as it arises by:

- (a) Giving notice to the party requesting removal of any encroachment and the reinstatement of the area to the satisfaction of the Council within a specified period at the owners cost



## Part F – Actions

These actions have been assigned priorities/timing and should be budgeted for as required through the Long Term Plan/Annual Plan processes.

Ref	Action	Outcomes Supported							Timing	Resources
		Soil Conservation	Fire risk Management	Recreational Opportunities	Invasive Species Control	Restoration of Native Habitats	Landscape Protection	Cultural Heritage Protection		
	<b>Kaitiakitanga / Guardianship</b>									
1.1.2	Establish regular schedule of hui with manawhenua	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Short term	Staff resources
1.1.3 1.1.4	Commence improvements to signs to better reflect iwi kaitiakitanga	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Medium term	Staff resources
	<b>Te mahi tahi / Working together</b>									
2.1.1	Identify and implement opportunities for participation			✓	✓	✓			Medium term	Staff resources
2.1.4	Review communication channels	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Short term	Staff resources
	<b>Te mahi hoahoa / Planning</b>									
3.1.1 4.1.1	Establish an inventory all assets, values and threats and commence regular condition and performance assessment programme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	Medium term	Staff and contract resources
3.1.3	Commence utilising plan direction and assessment criteria to assess new activities/development/management proposals against	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Medium term	Staff resources
5.1.3 6.1.2 8.1.3 9.1 10.1.2	Develop a Planting and Vegetation Management Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Short term	Staff and contract resources
5.1.4 6.1.3 9.1.1 12.1.2	Develop an Infrastructure Plan	✓	✓	✓		✓			Short - medium term	Staff and contract resources
	<b>Te reretahi / Coordination</b>									
4.1.1	Formalise a Council staff group to coordinate necessary actions to	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Short term	Staff resources



Ref	Action	Outcomes Supported							Timing	Resources
		Soil Conservation	Fire risk Management	Recreational Opportunities	Invasive Species Control	Restoration of Native Habitats	Landscape Protection	Cultural Heritage Protection		
	implement the management plan.									
4.1.2	Assign a staff relationship manager for Outcome areas.		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	Short term	Staff resources
4.1.3 8.1.5	Review the farm lease, operational contracts, or management agreements to ensure that these reflect assigned responsibilities and safety, biosecurity, and other statutory obligations.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			Short term	Staff and property manager resources
	<b>Te whāomoomo oneone /Soil conservation</b>									
7.1.1	Develop soil and water management work programme	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Short - medium term	Staff resources
5.1.2 7.1.8 8.1.2	Develop a Farm Plan in conjunction with the farm lessee	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Short - medium term	Staff resources
	<b>Te whakahaere tūraru ahi / Fire risk management</b>									
6.1.1	Develop a Fire Plan for the Park	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Short - medium term	Staff resources
	<b>Ngā āheinga mahi ā-rēhia / Recreation</b>									
6.1.4	Update Parks and Open Spaces Asset Management Plan to maintain inventory and condition assessment programme for recreation assets and develop sustainable capital, renewals, and maintenance programme			✓	✓				Short - medium term	Staff resources
7.1.5	Review Park booking system to ensure 'fit for purpose' for taking bookings provided for under this Plan		✓	✓	✓				Short - medium term	Staff resources
7.1.6	Review risk register for the Park is in place and is actively utilised	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Short - medium term	Staff resources
7.1.14-16	Identify and commence information and wayfinding signage improvements			✓				✓	Short - medium term	Staff resources
7.2.1	Undertake analysis of the existing walking and shared use tracks using	✓	✓	✓					Short term	Staff and contract

Wither Hills Management Plan

Ref	Action	Outcomes Supported						Timing	Resources
		Soil Conservation	Fire risk Management	Recreational Opportunities	Invasive Species Control	Restoration of Native Habitats	Landscape Protection		
	plan development criteria to identify and plan for further improvements								resources
7.3.1	Develop mountainbike trail management and development work programme in conjunction with the Mountainbike Club	✓	✓	✓				Short term	Staff and contract resources
	<b>Te tiaki i ngā taonga tuku iho / Cultural heritage protection</b>							-	
11.1.2	Work with manawhenua to determine whether wider identification of these pits and any known whakapapa is communicated to visitors by appropriate signage.						✓	Short term	Staff resources
	<b>Ngā rohe tauārai o te pāka / Park boundaries</b>								
13.1.4	Council actively considers where strategic land acquisition opportunities exist and that these are actively pursued by purchase or by entering into 'Right of First Refusal' agreements		✓	✓				Medium Term	Staff and property manager resources

## Appendices

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Appendix 1 – Glossary

Appendix 2 – Overview of legislation, plans and strategies

Appendix 3 – Standards

Appendix 4 – New Activity Assessment Criteria

Appendix 5 – References

DRAFT

## Appendix 1 – Glossary

Council	Marlborough District Council
Iwi	Tribe/people
Kai	Food
Kaitiaki	Guardian
Kaitiakitanga	The exercise of guardianship by mana whenua of an area and resources in accordance with tikanga Māori (customs and rules)
Manawhenua	Territorial rights, power from the land – power associated with possession and occupation of tribal land. A tribe's history and legends are based in the lands they have occupied over generations and the land provides the sustenance for the people and to provide hospitality for guests.
Mauri	The life force that comes from wairua – the spirit, or source of existence and all life
MEP	Marlborough Environment Plan
Park	Wither Hills Park
Rohe	Territory / area
Tangata whenua	People of the land
Taonga	Gift/treasure (physical, metaphysical and spiritual)
Te taiao	The natural world
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	The Treaty of Waitangi
Te Tau Ihu	The Top of the South Island (geographical location)
Tikanga	Custom, tradition, method, or habit
Tino rangatiratanga	Self-determination, sovereignty, autonomy, self-government, domination, rule, control, power
Wāhi tapu	Sacred sites or places
Whānau	Refers to the extended family, although it can also mean, “to give birth.” The whānau was the basic social unit of Māori society; it usually included grandparents or great-grandparents and their direct descendants.
Whenua	Land

## Appendix 2 – Overview of legislation, plans and strategies

The Council is guided by legislation and statutory requirements for the provision of reserves and open space. There are also other strategies and plans that have relevance to the management and use of the Wither Hills.

### Te Tiriti o Waitangi

The Treaty is the founding document and foundation of this country. It binds the relationship between the Māori tribes and the Crown, that provided the opportunity for all people to live in New Zealand. Its purpose was for these distinct peoples to live alongside each other peacefully and with mutual respect and cooperation.

As established through the Courts and Waitangi Tribunal processes, the Council has an obligation to give effect to apply the following principles in its work:

- **Active Protection**  
To actively protect that which is important to Māori
- **Tribal Autonomy**  
Guarantees Māori the right to manage, control and enjoy their own resources and taonga in accordance with their cultural preferences.
- **Redress for the Past**  
To address past actions or omissions of the Crown that led to harmful effects for Māori.
- **Duty to Consult**  
Ensuring Māori are consulted with on matters of importance to them.

### Local Government Act 2002

The Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) is a far-reaching statute that has as its essential purpose to *provide for democratic and effective local government that recognises the diversity of New Zealand communities*. This includes promoting the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future.

The LGA also contains obligations to Māori, including the consideration of options in decision making and to facilitate Māori participation in decision-making processes.

### Long Term Plan (LTP)

The Long Term Plan documents all the Council's activities and services it is intending to provide over the coming 10 years. This includes the provision and maintenance of open space and recreational areas and facilities. The LTP is therefore significant in assisting to achieve the outcomes of the Wither Hills Park Management Plan.

### Reserves Act 1977

While most of the land comprising the Wither Hills Park is not subject to the Reserves Act, the Council has opted to use the process for Reserve Management Plan development for the preparation of this policy document.

These steps include the following actions:

- Provide public notice of intention to review the plan and to invite persons and organisations to provide written suggestions on the proposed plan and for these suggestions to be considered in its development (Section 41(5))

- On completion of a draft plan give public notice that the draft plan is available for inspection and to invite written submissions on the draft plan, and that an opportunity for submissions to be heard before a committee or subcommittee of Council and that these are taken into account prior to a plans being finalised and approved by Council. (Section 41 (6)).

Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991

The purpose of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. In this Act, sustainable management means:

“Managing the use, development, and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic, and cultural well-being and for their health and safety while—

- (a) sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and
- (b) safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems; and
- (c) avoiding, remedying, or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.”

The Council must have regard to a number of principles set out in Sections 6, 7 and 8 of the RMA and prepare a range of plans and policies to assist in achieving the purpose of the Act. Plans and policies that cover the area of the Wither Hills are the Marlborough Regional Policy Statement, Wairau/Awatere Resource Management Plan (WARMP) and the proposed Marlborough Environment Plan (MEP).

National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (2020)

Seeks to ensure that freshwater is managed in a way that prioritises the health and wellbeing of water bodies, then the essential needs of people followed by other uses (Te Mana o te Wai).

It achieves this by requiring plans to be developed to improve degraded water bodies and maintain or improve all others using bottom lines defined in the policy statement and associated regulations.

National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (2023)

Provides direction to councils on how to identify significant natural areas and manage the adverse effects of new activities on them and requires councils to promote the restoration of indigenous biodiversity and indigenous vegetation cover.

It achieves this by requiring all regional councils to have a regional biodiversity strategy setting out their native biodiversity priorities and to monitor our native species.

Marlborough Environment Plan (MEP)

The MEP was publicly notified in 2016 and is the culmination of a review of the WARMP and other resource management plans and policies for Marlborough. At the time of notifying the Draft Plan, the MEP was not operative although many of its provisions had effectively reached an operative status.

MEP controls and rules relating to the Wither Hills include:

Zoning:

- Predominantly Open Space 3 Zone

- A small area of Rural Zone land either side of Redwood Street

Areas / Overlays:

- High amenity landscapes
- Landscape significant ridgelines
- Sensitive soils

Designations:

- Telecommunications purposes – Telecom
- Soil Conservation Area – Marlborough District Council

Biosecurity Act (1993)

The purpose of the Biosecurity Act is to help keep harmful organisms out of New Zealand and to provide a framework for how we respond and manage them when they arrive and are naturalised.

One important element required under the Act are Regional Pest Management Plans (RPMP), that the Council as a Unitary Authority has been producing using to guide biosecurity management programmes throughout the district. The current operative plan was produced in 2018 and contains policies and rules relating to a number of pest species within the Wither Hills including:

- Chilean needle grass
- Nasella tussock.
- Broom and Gorse
- Rabbits
- Possum.

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014

The purpose of the Act is to promote the identification, protection, preservation, and conservation of the historical and cultural heritage of New Zealand. It contains rules regarding the discovery of archaeological sites that may be disturbed during earthworks. Any modification or destruction of a known or unknown archaeological site requires an authority from Heritage New Zealand.

Marlborough Walking and Cycling Strategy 2019-29

The strategy provides a framework to increase walking and cycling participation and safety in Marlborough. This strategy contains network and action plans that identify existing and proposed tracks, facilities, and projects to develop and expand walking and cycling networks. While currently silent on the Wither Hills, it is currently under review.

Reserves Asset Management Plan 2015-2025

The Reserves Asset Management Plan guides the Council for the next 10 years in its provision and management of parks and reserves across the district. It defines levels of service and the new assets, asset renewals and maintenance required to achieve these levels of service. The current plan is soon to be reviewed.

Dog Control Bylaw 2021

This bylaw provides controls for dogs including leashing, exercising and other controls when in public places.

## Appendix 3 – Standards

### Walking

New Zealand Handbook Tracks and Outdoor Visitor Structures SNZ HB 8630:2004.

Track Construction and Maintenance Guidelines – VC 1672 Department of Conservation: 2008

### Biking

New Zealand Mountain Bike Trail Design & Construction Guidelines – July 2018.

New Zealand Cycle Trail Design Guide August 2019 (5th edition) Prepared for Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment.

### Accessibility

Compliance with NZS 4121:2001

### User behaviour

New Zealand Environmental Care Code

Leave no trace: <https://www.mountainsafety.org.nz/learn/skills/environment/>

Tiaki Promise <https://www.tiakinewzealand.com/>

### Noise control

Marlborough Environment Plan rules

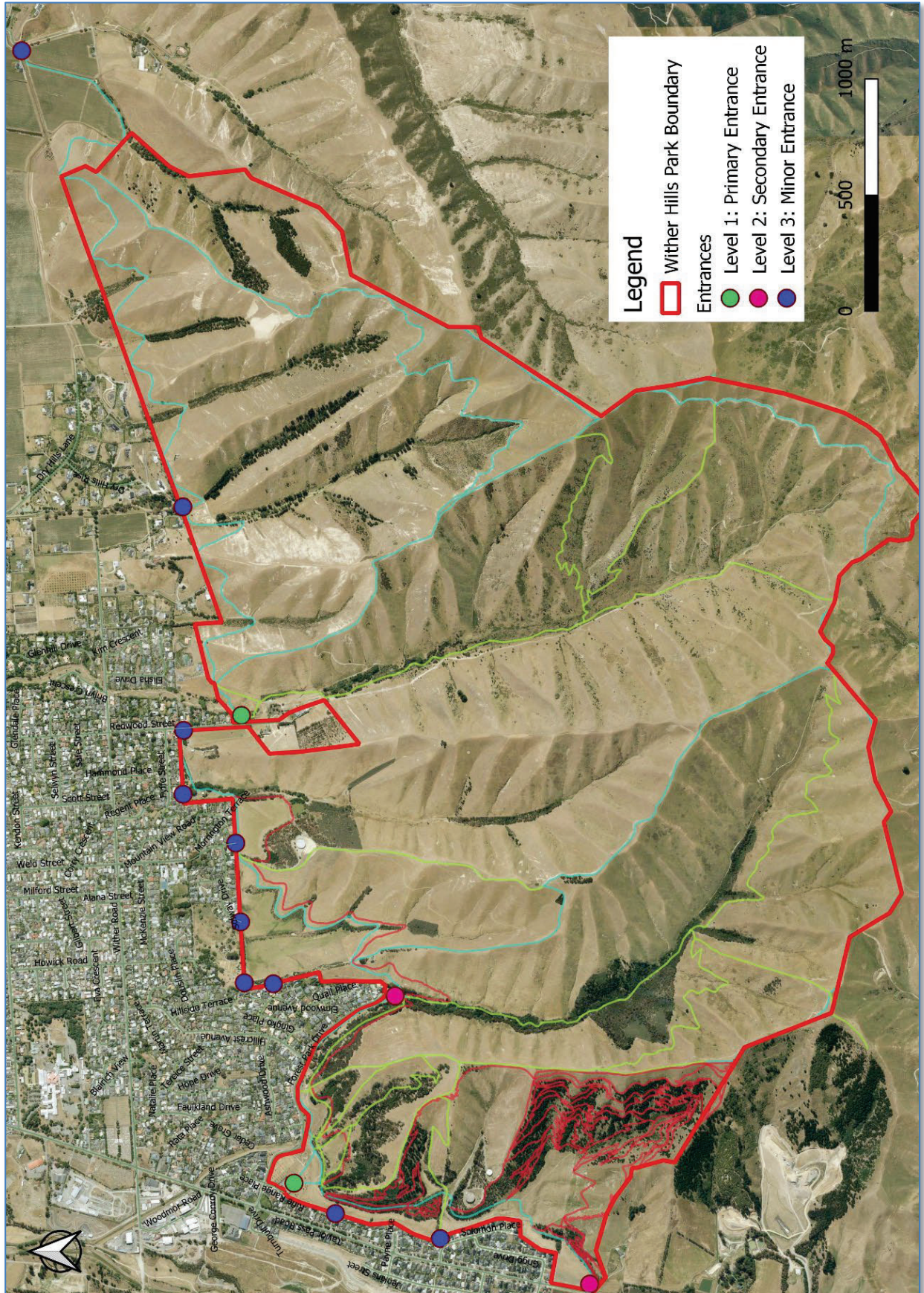
### Signage

NZS 8603:2005 Design and application of outdoor recreation symbols

Ensure the design of signs is in accordance with the Council's branding and signs guidelines



Park Entrance Locations, Features and Levels of Service



Level	Locations	Features	Levels of Service
Level 1 Primary Entrance	Rifle Range Place Redwood Street Upper – Sutherland Stream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asphalt driveway and footpath</li> <li>Dedicated carparking/bike parking (including for buses and large campervans)</li> <li>Barrier free entry<sup>37</sup></li> <li>Signboard</li> <li>Toilets</li> <li>Drinking water</li> <li>Picnic tables</li> <li>Shade</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular servicing of toilets and waste facilities</li> <li>Grounds maintenance</li> <li>Repairs and maintenance as required</li> </ul>
Level 2 Secondary Entrance	Taylor Pass Road – Mountainbike Park Forest Park Drive – Quail Stream	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dedicated carparking/bike parking (including for large campervans)</li> <li>Barrier free entry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grounds maintenance</li> <li>Repairs and maintenance as required</li> </ul>
Level 3 Minor Entrance	Grigg Drive Taylor Pass Road (159/163) Elmwood Avenue Reserve Harling Park Solway Drive Weld Street Fyffe Street (17/19) Redwood Street – Lower Dry Hills Lane – Local Purpose Reserve Cob Cottage Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Signboard</li> <li>Barrier free entry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Repairs and maintenance as required</li> </ul>

<sup>37</sup> Suitable for wheelchair, mobility scooter, baby buggy and bike access.

**Walking track and mountainbike trail categories**

Walking track categories				
Classification	Examples	Features	User suitability	
Easy access short walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gentle Annie track to Gentle Annie link track loop</li> <li>Sutherland Stream Track – lower</li> </ul>	<p>Up to 1 hour’s easy walking (return). Well-formed on a durable surface such as concrete, chip seal, asphalt or compacted gravel, no steps, or steep sections. Stream and rivers are bridged.</p>	People of all abilities, wheelchairs, buggies and strollers	
Short Walk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rifle Range track</li> <li>Stockyard Track</li> </ul>	<p>Up to 1 hour’s easy walking (return). Track is well formed, with an even, well drained surface. There may be steps. Stream and rivers crossings are bridged.</p>	People of most ages and fitness levels.	
Walking Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gentle Annie Track/Grassy Ridge – Rotary Lookout loop</li> </ul>	<p>Gentle walking from a few minutes to a day. Track is mostly well formed, some sections may be steep, rough, or muddy. Clearly signposted. Stream and river crossings are bridged.</p>	People with low to moderate fitness and abilities.	
Easy Tramping Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Twin Tanks Walk – Quail Stream</li> <li>Sutherland Stream – Covenant Loop Track – Mt Vernon Track loop</li> <li>Taylor View, Split Apple Peak, Mt Vernon Track</li> </ul>	<p>Track is generally well formed, some sections may be rough, muddy, or steep. Track has signs, poles, or markers. Major stream and river crossings are bridged.</p>	People with moderate fitness and limited remote area experience.	
Tramping Track	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No tramping tracks</li> </ul>	<p>Track is mostly unformed, may be rough and steep. Track has markers or poles Unbridged stream and river crossings.</p>	People with moderate to high level of fitness and remote area skills and experience.	
Route	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No formal routes</li> </ul>	<p>Generally unformed, lightly cut route catering for the most experienced of backcountry visitors. Routes follow the lie of the land and are not formed.</p>	Remoteness Seekers (RS)	

Mountainbike trail categories				
Grade	Current Examples <sup>38</sup>	Features	User suitability	
Grade 1: Easiest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boundary rider</li> <li>Cams Run</li> <li>Stockyard</li> <li>Wiggles</li> </ul>	Fairly flat wide and smooth track or gravel road	First time and beginner riders	
Grade 2: Easy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Autobahn</li> <li>Scenic Route</li> <li>Skyline</li> <li>Squawking Magpie</li> </ul>	Mostly flat with some gentle climbs on smooth tracks with easily avoidable obstacles, such as rocks, tree roots or potholes.	Novice riders	
Grade 3: Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pampalona</li> <li>Electric Brae</li> <li>Trainspotting</li> <li>Muncher</li> </ul>	Steeper grades on a loose surface; trickier obstacles may be present but are avoidable; maybe some exposure at the outside edge of the track.	Intermediate riders	
Grade 4: Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nil</li> </ul>	A mixture of steep climbs, loose track surfaces and obstacles that are tricky to avoid or jump over; generally exposed at the outer edge of the track. Most riders will find some sections easier to walk.	Advanced riders	
Grade 5: Expert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nil</li> </ul>	Prolonged steep climbs or downhill; generally exposed at the outside edge of the track, with technically challenging obstacles and sharp corners. The majority of riders will need to walk some sections.	Expert riders	
Grade 6: Extreme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nil</li> </ul>	Downhill or free ride specific tricks; Extremely steep sections with large drop offs and other unavoidable obstacles; may include huge manmade structures and jumps.  <b>NOTE: Tracks maybe a grade higher when wet</b>	Extreme riders	

<sup>38</sup> Based in current gradings prior to a grade audit undertaken by Envisage NZ for Marlborough District Council. October 2023.

## Appendix 4 – New activity assessment criteria

### A4.1 Primary assessment criteria – soil conservation

#### A4.1.1 Activities that require assessment for soil conservation effects

Any activity that has the potential to disturb the ground, where earthworks is required, or vegetation cover may be disturbed, or any activity which alters or concentrates the flow of water runoff within the Park

OR

Any activity which adversely affects operational requirements or assets such as disturbance of stock or grazing access, blocking or damage to roads, tracks, fences, structures, vegetation and other assets which are necessary for management of soil conservation function.

#### A4.1.2 Factors to take into account

- (a) The extent to which the activity aligns with, and contributes towards, meeting Plan target outcomes and objectives
- (b) The location of the activity relative to known areas of higher soil conservation risk as identified through:
  - i. Land use capability mapping (Classes 6 and 7)
  - ii. MEP Soil Sensitive Area Overlay
- (c) The extent to which potential adverse effects from the activity can be mitigated
- (d) The views and preferences of manawhenua partners, stakeholders and the wider community.

#### A4.1.3 Possible outcomes

- (a) Activity approved as no or minimal additional soil conservation risk
- (b) Activity approved with conditions to mitigate soil conservation risk
- (c) Activity changed to eliminate soil conservation risk
- (d) Activity declined as not possible to adequately change or mitigate activity to acceptable levels of soil conservation risk

### A4.2 Secondary assessment criteria

#### A4.2.1 Activities that require assessment for other effects

Any activity that has the potential to adversely affect other Plan outcome areas

#### A4.2.2 Factors to take into account

##### A4.2.2.1 The extent to which the activity aligns with, and contributes towards, meeting Plan target outcomes and objectives

##### A4.2.2.2 Any possible effects on other outcome areas including:

- (a) Fire Risk
  - i. Could the activity further raise fire risk by:
    - Increasing the likelihood of fire ignition?  
*New ignition source or an increase in an existing source?*
    - Increasing the consequence?  
*More difficult to detect and respond to quickly? Increasing the rate of spread or intensity of a fire? Increasing the exposure of people or assets to damage or injury?*

- (b) Recreation
  - i. Is the activity provided for in the management plan?
  - ii. Could the activity adversely affect other recreational uses of the Park?
  - iii. Does the activity create safety issues for visitors?
- (c) Invasive Species Control
  - i. Could the activity exacerbate pest spread or density?  
*Creating or increasing a vector for pest spread? Changing environmental conditions resulting in an increased pest density?*
- (d) Restoration of Native Habitats
  - i. Could the activity jeopardise or slow restoration efforts?  
*Physical damage? Introduction or exacerbation of pests and diseases? Changes to environmental conditions adversely affecting plantings?*
- (e) Landscape Protection
  - i. Could the activity adversely affect key landscape values?
- (f) Cultural Heritage Protection
  - i. Could the activity adversely affect cultural features and values?  
*Direct damage to cultural features? Downstream effects? Disrespectful behaviour?*

A4.2.2.3 The effect of the activity on the farming operation or other operations undertaken within the Park (including infrastructure services)

- (a) Could the activity adversely affect important operations or assets?
  - i. Disturbance to stock? Blocking or damage to roads, tracks, fences and other farm assets and network infrastructure?

A4.2.2.4 The extent to which potential adverse effects from the activity can be mitigated

A4.2.2.5 The views and preferences of manawhenua partners, stakeholders and the wider community

A4.2.3 Possible outcomes

- (a) Activity approved as no, or minimal, other likely effects
- (b) Activity approved with conditions to mitigate other likely effects
- (c) Activity changed to eliminate other likely effects
- (d) Activity declined as not possible to adequately change or mitigate to acceptable levels.

## Appendix 5 – References

**Ballinger Helen, Meurk Colin, Hewitt Tony, Clark Garry, Silcock Russell and Logan, Abott Wayne, Hart John (Rangitane)** – Riverlands Industrial Estate telling the story of historical context, environmental responsibility & sustainable development

**Bathgate, Janet 1995** – Draft Design Framework & Interpretation Strategy for Recreation Development on Wither Hill Farm Park

**Department of Conservation, 2015** – Electric bikes on public conservation land – guideline

**Envisage New Zealand, 2023** – Trail Grading for Off-road Cycling Trails at Wither Hills, Marlborough District.

**Integrated Consultancy Limited, 2022** – Wither Hills Farm Park – Prometheus Wildfire Risk Report Supplement

**Integrated Consultancy Limited, 2023** – Wither Hills Farm Park – Wildfire Risk Management Analysis

**Mackay-Smith Thomas, Burkitt Lucy, López Ignacio and Reid Janet** – Kānuka as a Silvopastoral Tree for Low Producing Hill Country

**Marlborough District Council 2018** – **Regional Pest Management Plan**

**Marlborough District Council 2011** – Soil Survey of Part of the Wither Hills – Redwood Hills Area, Marlborough (MDC Technical Report No: 11-004) <https://www.marlborough.govt.nz/environment/land/soils/soil-reports>

**Marlborough District Council** – Taylor River Floodway Reserve Recreation and Amenity Plan

**Marlborough District Council 2019** – Walking and Cycling Strategy

**Marlborough District Council, Department of Conservation, QEII National Trust 2004** – Native Vegetation for South Marlborough – A Planting Guide

**Marlborough District Council 2003** – Wither Hills Farm Park Management Plan

**New Zealand Plant Conservation Network – Wither Hills Plant List**  
<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/publications/plant-lists/plant-lists-by-region/wither-hills-wthr/>

**QEII National Trust, 1997** – Sutherland Stream Open Space Covenant (Wither Hills Farm Park)

**QEII National Trust, 1997** – Sutherland Stream Open Space Covenant (Wither Hills Farm Park) Management Statement