

Impact of subdivision work on Aranui Park

On the western side of Aranui Park in Māpua, there is a beautiful stand of six kahikatea trees near the fenceline with the neighbouring property, the former Mount Hope Orchard. The orchard land at 166 Māpua Drive is now owned by a development company, Projects and Ventures Ltd, which is planning to create a subdivision, which we understand will be for 40-50 houses. A subdivision is planned, with houses overlooking the park.



Projects and Ventures Ltd is reported to be holding discussions with the Tasman District Council about its proposal. The land is zoned Deferred Residential, which we understand would mean the subdividers would have to install water and sewerage services.

Discussions between company and the council have been closed session meetings, with no reports for the public on what is being proposed. In the meantime, the company started intensive landscape alteration work on its Mt Hope site in mid-July 2020. It has taken soil from western parts of the land and used it to fill in what used to be a gully on the northeastern side of the property. It has also felled and cleared scores of trees from the property. We have been advised that, under the present RMA law, the company does not need council planning consent for this work. In addition to the extensive earthmoving, it has used excavators to remove the trees from the site from mid July- mid August 2020.

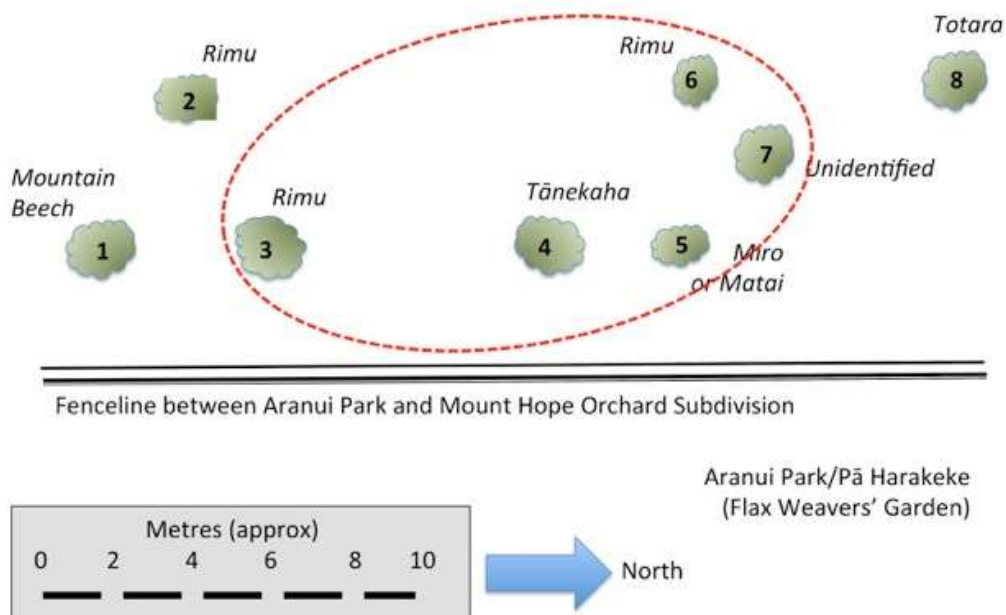




Excavators have worked close to the boundary of Aranui Park, the wettest part of the park and the location of scores of wet-tolerant native plants and trees notably: kahikatea, rimu, tī kouka and harakeke planted by Māpua and district community residents.

Above the gully, the contractors uncovered a cluster of eight significant trees, believed to be about 100 years old. They are understood to have been planted by the pioneer orchardist, Arnold Wells. Later, a small group of members of the Mapua Community Association asked the developers to retain these significant heritage trees. The company said it would consider the request. However, in the first week of August said it was felling two of the trees, (on the map below, these are tree number 1, a mountain beech and tree number 7, an unknown exotic tree.) The company says it would advise within about eight weeks whether it was prepared to save the remaining six trees: Rimu trees number 2, 3 and 6, Tanekaha, number 4, Miro or Matai number 5 and Totara, number 8

Indicative map of trees, showing group requested for preservation





This is what the cluster of trees looked like from the park before the mountain beech, the big exotic tree and nearby gum trees were removed. The company's clearing and earth-moving work intensified in late July and early August and the company was using bigger excavators. By mid-August, the landscape on the western side of the fence of Aranui Park had been totally transformed.

This is the view from park fenceline of one of the rimu trees which were part of the cluster of eight significant trees. The 'cluster' has been severely reduced. The photo was taken from the Aranui Park fenceline on August 16 2020. Note the pile of stumps behind the tree.



The company excavators had been working in the gully area, immediately adjacent to fenceline between the housing site and Aranui Park. Its excavators created a steep bank of earth on its side of the fence, and built a new fence about 2 metres west of the existing boundary fence between the park and the Mt Hope property.



The company later created a second fenceline about 1.5 metres west of the Aranui Park/Mt Hope fenceline.



In the area of the stand of kahikatea trees, the excavators appear to have driven close to the original fence, which is on a lean and in poor repair just to the right of the new black fence erected by the contractors.

Later in August 2020, work on the subdivision stopped. We do not know if there has been some form of council intervention or if Projects and Ventures Ltd is applying for a resource consent for its planned subdivision.

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