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Date: 21 September 2022

Name: Corinna Tessendorf
Address: PO Box 39071, Wellington Mail Centre, Lower Hutt 5045

Dear Corinna

GABITES BLOCK UPPER HUTT - PRIVATE PLAN CHANGE: ECOLOGICAL REVIEW

This letter provides a summary of our review of the ecological assessment and provisions for the proposed Gabites Block Plan Change, and the resulting discussions held via MS teams yesterday.

We are generally satisfied that the provisions will suitably protect indigenous habitats identified as Gabites Block Natural Areas (GBNAs) and we support the provisions that would avoid the construction of building platforms, access ways, utilities, and wastewater dispersal fields within the GBNAs identified. There was some discussion regarding whether these areas would be more accurately named Gabites Block Significant Natural Areas given that they meet the significance criteria in Policy 23 of the Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington Region. However, we accept that the current proposed naming can be used given that the region wide SNA identification process is still underway.

We would like clarification on the natural areas that have not been mapped and described, or have been mapped as 'native scrub', as these areas may also meet the criteria for GBNAs. We understand that a more detailed survey and assessment would take place at the subdivision stage. There remains some concern that indigenous habitats not classed as GBNAs may be cleared with no limit on the amount that will be lost. However, we acknowledge that this must be balanced against what is already allowed as a permitted baseline under the existing plan.

We would also like to ensure that the provisions acknowledge the potential for exotic vegetation to support threatened indigenous fauna. We note that this is likely to be adequately address through the preparation of an Ecological Plan that must identify potential bat and lizard habitats and set out the requirements for managing nesting birds outside the GBNAs, regardless of whether these areas are dominated by indigenous or exotic vegetation.

Provisions allowing for vegetation trimming/clearance within GBNAs to maintain buildings, roads, tracks etc, and for the construction of a cycleway, should be subject to appropriate limits relating to the width of the trimming/clearance relative to the structure being maintained/constructed.

We are generally supportive of the proposed offsetting and compensation principles, although it would be appropriate to have 'ecological equivalence' (ie like for like) as a separate principle. We also suggest that 'long term outcomes' is replaced with 'permanence', which should include a reference to legal mechanisms to ensure legal protection in perpetuity.

Yours sincerely



Sarah Budd
Principal Ecologist, Auckland Ecology Team Leader and Coordinator