



5.2 Sector 2: Ohariu Ridge



Ohariu Ridge is a prominent skyline feature in views from Churton Park. Newly acquired Council land adjoins the pine plantation at left, rising to the landmark high point (centre). The remainder of the ridge (to right) remains the largest gap in the Outer Green Belt reserves network.

Key features/values

- Largest gap in the Outer Green Belt's reserves, public access and ecological corridor
- Ohariu Ridge is an important rural hill backdrop mainly in private ownership
- Recent land acquisition in 2018 off Ohariu Valley Road opens up opportunities, including public access to the ridgetop
- Churton Park Reserves now better linked by the recent land acquisition
- Potential to expand and improve Outer Green Belt connectivity with adjacent suburbs under Upper Stebbings Valley Structure Plan.

Local communities:

Redwood, Stebbings Valley, Churton Park, Glenside, Ohariu Valley

Current volunteer/ community group activities:

Walking group

5.2.1 Overview

Sector 2 (47.4 ha) runs along Ohariu Ridge from the junction of Marshall and Ohariu Ridges to the Old Coach Road. The Outer Green Belt reserves are patchy, comprising two small reserves on the edge of Churton Park, a recently acquired contiguous block of land at 268 Ohariu Valley Road and then, after a gap, two small reserves adjoining Old Coach Road. North of the newly acquired block, the ridgetop is privately owned for about 2km, as far as the Airstrip Block reserve in Management Sector 1. Additional Outer Green Belt reserves at the north end of this sector are likely to be an outcome of the current Upper Stebbings Valley Structure Plan process.

5.2.1.1 Land administration

Stebbing Valley Structure Plan

Potential for new residential housing at the north end of Stebbings Valley and on parts of Marshall Ridge is currently being considered through a structure plan process. The affected area is shown on the sector map. The draft structure plan is expected to be considered in 2019-2020 and the broad objectives of this OGBMP and the structure plan taken into account.

The structure plan could include a mix of housing types to cater for diverse housing needs. It is proposed that any development would be compact and well connected in terms of public and active (walking and cycling) connections. New road networks could improve access to Outer Green Belt reserves.

The structure plan area is in the upper catchment of the Stebbings Stream, which in turn is part of the Porirua Stream catchment, where water quality and flooding are issues. The infrastructure of any new development will be designed to improve water quality and prevent downstream flooding. A network of open spaces will be part of the plan, to provide neighbourhood parks and wider open space connections to cater for a variety of recreational needs, landscape protection and people's need for contact with nature. Important native forest remnants, areas of regenerating vegetation and water courses are likely to be protected and included in the open space network. The values of these areas will be considered in the context of the existing and future potential Outer Green Belt reserves network.

Open space is likely to be identified for addition to the Outer Green Belt, which will help define the urban edge and add potential links to the Outer Green Belt by connecting up with the Airstrip Block and Redwood Bush in Management Sector 1. New open space areas should extend and better connect outdoor recreational opportunities for the communities on both sides of Marshall Ridge and better connect, restore and expand some of the scattered areas of natural value in the vicinity. Complementary areas of open space will be protected along Marshall Ridge. Once the actual areas of additional open space are known, there will be opportunities to develop entrances and a track network that will greatly enhance public access to the ridge in Management Sector 1 and across to the rural environment in the Ohariu Valley.

268 Ohariu Valley Road

The Council acquired this 31-ha property in November 2018 for addition to the Outer Green Belt. As shown on the sector map, it extends north from its Ohariu Valley Road frontage along Ohariu Ridge above Churton Park. It includes a locally prominent skyline landmark 'peak' and steep slopes dropping down to the Churton Park Reserves. A Transpower transmission line and buffer area runs along the property, where tall tree planting is restricted. In due course, the Council will vest all or parts of the property as scenic reserve but not until a landscape development plan for the future management and development of the property is completed, as it is possible some portions of the land could be found to be surplus to requirements or suited to another use.

Opportunities to close the remaining gap in the Outer Green Belt's connectivity in this sector will continue to be a priority.



5.2.1.2 Landscape and land use

The landscape in this sector of the Outer Green Belt is currently rural in character. It is entirely covered in pasture, with the exception of a privately owned pine plantation at the Ohariu Valley Road saddle and a few scattered remnants of native forest and patches of regenerating scrub in gullies. The pasture cover reveals the underlying land form and makes for a quite striking visual backdrop immediately above Churton Park and, more distantly, from Woodridge, Paparangi and Grenada Village. The ridgetops here are lower in elevation than further south in the Outer Green, rising from a low point of 285m asl elevation at the Ohariu Valley Road saddle to 300m asl on Ohariu Ridge and 365m asl where the Old Coach Road crosses the ridge. Nevertheless, it is an important landscape feature and undeveloped skyline in the northern suburbs that clearly defines the urban edge. It lies within the district plan overlay of visually prominent 'ridgelines and hilltops' to which provisions apply to protect and manage the ridgetop open space values.

Typical features of the Outer Green Belt ridgetop landscapes are seen here too - the rocky outcrops associated with the remnants of an ancient eroded plateau that once covered large areas of the Wellington region and expansive 3600 vistas from key viewpoints east over the northern suburbs, north towards Porirua Harbour and south over the country side of Ohariu Valley to the distant hills of Mākara and South Island mountains beyond.

Keeping the ridgetops open to protect this landscape character and provide local communities with a more rugged recreational environment than they have had access to until now will be an important part of managing the growing Outer Green Belt reserve network in this sector. Options on how best to maintain the grass cover on the tops will need to be considered as part of the development planning for the 268 Ohariu Valley Road property. At the same time, there is the opportunity to extend the Outer Green Belt ecological corridor by restoring native vegetation cover to the steep gullies and hillsides below the open tops on the Churton Park Reserves and steep flanks of 268 Ohariu Valley Road. The 2017/2018 citizen survey indicated that people value the bush and green spaces of the Outer Green Belt and that the pattern of bush with open tops has proved popular elsewhere.



5.2.1.3 Nature

There is huge potential for ecological restoration and catchment protection in this sector. Though pasture is the dominant land cover, a few precious native forest remnants remain (some of it on reserve land, some on neighbouring land) which would greatly benefit from protection through reserve status, buffer planting, weed and pest animal control. Some regeneration is occurring in the gullies and lower slopes. The residential subdivision development in Churton Park includes new reserves that have been established and improved through additional planting by the developer to protect natural values associated with bush remnants and the Stebbings Streams.

There is potential for further restoration in the little gully systems on the Council's reserves expanding out from the tiny remnants. Seral (pioneer) species will be used predominantly over the next 10 years to shelter the remnants and improve connectivity - creating 'stepping stones' that will reduce the distance between areas of habitat and, with time, merge into a corridor. Wilding pines are likely to be a problem here due to the proximity of a neighbouring private pine plantation.

The tops will be kept in grassland, which provides useful habitat for wildlife such as lizards. Grazing is likely to be used to maintain pasture cover in the interim, while the land management and development options of the 268 Ohariu Valley property are being considered. The results of the proposal to try phasing out grazing on the grassland tops of Te Wharangi ridge in sectors 3 and 4 will help to inform land management decisions.

The Council will encourage and, support if possible, neighbouring landowners to protect and care for the small scattered native forest remnants on private land along the Ohariu Ridge, which are particularly important because there is so little remaining.



5.2.1.4 Recreation and access

The acquisition of 268 Ohariu Valley Road has opened up significant opportunities to provide, for the first time, the Churton Park community with access to the kinds of extensive open spaces that the Outer Green Belt offers - the more rugged ridgetop environment, expansive views and increased choice of recreational routes.

The new land offers an immediate opportunity to better connect the local track network, in line with objectives in both *Capital Spaces* and the *Open Space Access Plan*, which prioritise completing the Skyline Track and improving the choice and connectivity of short track links in adjacent suburbs. The Churton Park Reserves are no longer land-locked and, though the land is steep, a track up to the landmark high point above is now possible. From there, access can now be developed south to Ohariu Valley Road, with the possibility of negotiating public access across the Transpower land on the other side of the road, to connect up to Totara Ridge and the reserves at Old Coach Road. With such access, the Skyline Track could be extended north by about 2km.

Further north, the potential addition of more ridgetop land under the Upper Stebbings Valley Structure Plan would enable better connections to tracks in Management Sector 1. In combination, these scenarios would see the gap in the Skyline Track narrowed to little more than 2km and the potential to re-route the track from Ohariu Valley Road onto the ridgeline in Management Sector 1, down through the future open space and street network in Stebbings Valley and back up at the Churton Park Reserves - until public access along the actual ridgeline can be achieved. Ridgeline access would open up potential to extend bridle trails as well as foot and cycle routes.

With the Outer Green Belt reserves growing in this sector and in Management Sector 1, a new main entrance to the Outer Green Belt will need to be developed in the Upper Stebbings Valley near the upper end of Marshall Ridge. The location will provide centralised access from both management sectors but the exact location will be subject to the outcomes of the structure planning. A secondary entrance can be developed in the short-term at the Churton Park Reserves and the potential for entrance development at 268 Ohariu Road investigated.



5.2.1.5 Culture and heritage

Themes to be explored in this sector include gold prospecting in the Stebbings Valley and the local farming history associated with the naming of Marshall Ridge and Stebbings Stream.



5.2.1.6 Community and identity

Given the limited extent and disconnected distribution of Outer Green Belt reserve land in this sector to date, there has been little opportunity for the local community to enjoy, let alone help to plan, develop and care for it. That situation has already changed with the recent land acquisition. Potential for future reserves in upper Stebbings Valley will also help to see an open space network start to come together on the Ohariu Ridge that local communities will be able to see as 'their' part of the Outer Green Belt.

The Council will need to engage with people in local communities to hear their ideas about how they would like their Outer Green Belt to evolve and to encourage active involvement. As has happened elsewhere along the Outer Green Belt, community participation has helped to foster community resilience by bringing people together with a shared focus on enjoying and looking after the open spaces, as well as bringing nature closer to people's everyday lives.

The Council will also seek to establish good relationships with its neighbours and work with them where opportunities present to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, for example, supporting neighbours to manage weeds and restore vegetation in gullies on their private land.

5.2.2 Actions

N = new initiative; E = Existing; Ex = Expand existing

(Notes: (i) Some 'new' projects come within larger funded programmes but have not yet been started. (ii) Implementation depends on budget allocations.)

5.2.2.1 Land administration

Land acquisition

1.	Continue to seek opportunities to improve the connectivity of the Outer Green Belt along Ohariu Ridge, whether by land acquisition, rights-of-way easements or other mechanisms.	E	ongoing
2.	Advocate for open space provision in the Upper Stebbings Structure Plan that will extend and help connect the Outer Green Belt reserves along the Ohariu Ridge in management sectors 1 and 2.	N	1-2 yrs

5.2.2.2 Nature

Caring for nature

1.	Work with neighbouring land owners to identify and protect the prime bush remnants on nearby private land.	N	1-2 yrs
2.	Restore any native forest remnants that are added to the Outer Green Belt in this sector through the Upper Stebbings Valley Structure Plan by such means as fencing, weed and pest animal management and enhancement planting.	N	2-5 yrs

Streams

3.	Work with private land owners and GWRC to support the protection and restoration of the Stebbings Stream and the upper catchment area.	Ex	1-2 yrs
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Indigenous flora and planting

4.	Establish restoration planting in the Churton Park Reserves gullies to protect and enhance existing remnant vegetation in the gullies and expand the patches of indigenous vegetation to improve their connectivity over the next 10 years.	Ex	ongoing
5.	Manage the scattered native forest remnants in the reserves of this sector to enhance their condition and connect them with other remnants wherever possible, including with other remnants and areas of regenerating vegetation along the wider Marshall Ridge/Stebbing Stream valley and Ohariu Ridge.	N	3-5 yrs

Weeds and pest animals

6.	Ensure timely management of weed wilding trees to protect native forest restoration efforts.	N	3-5 yrs
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5.2.2.3 Landscape and land use

Open space management and planning

1.	Advocate for opportunities in the Upper Stebbings Valley structure planning process to reinforce the Outer Green Belt's important role in urban form and open space provision, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting the continuity of open space along the main Ohariu ridge as an ecological corridor, a visual backdrop and defined edge to urban growth Protecting the headwaters of the Stebbings Stream and other stream tributaries Protecting and connecting bush remnants Developing a track network that connects and extends streets and walkways in the housing areas to provide more choice of recreational routes and environments, including access along and across the Ohariu ridge and local loop walks Connections to the Outer Green Belt from the existing and new road network and residential development, with public transport connections and good road frontage and space for public parking at the main entrance location and secondary entrances. 	N	1-2 yrs
2.	Complete a landscape development plan for the 268 Ohariu Valley Road property, in consultation with the community, to provide for site development and management in such a way that the open space values will be recognised, protected and enhanced, taking into account: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The site's landscape character The potential for it to enhance the connectivity of the Outer Green Belt, for example, the ecological corridor and existing and future public access to the north and south The potential to connect recreational routes to the existing reserve network in Churton Park and future reserves in the Upper Stebbings Valley The potential and feasibility of developing a drive-on entrance off Ohariu Valley Road Land management options, for example, how to maintain the open ridgetop character. 	N	3-5 yrs

Landscape character

1.	Maintain areas of open grassland and lookout points on Council-owned land along the ridgetop, taking into account: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The benefit of people being able to experience the wide views, sense of space and rural setting as one of a variety of recreational experiences The feasibility of using grazing to maintain pasture compatible with recreational use The potential for retiring some areas of pasture to better connect native forest remnants and protect catchment values. 	N	ongoing
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5.2.2.4 Culture and heritage

Interpretation

1.	Develop interpretative material in a variety of media about cultural and heritage features and history in this sector, within the overall Outer Green Belt interpretation plan (see policy 4.6.2.5, focusing particularly on the local farming and gold mining history in this locality.	N	5-10 yrs
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5.2.2.5 Recreation and access

Track network

1.	Develop a track network plan with the community and develop new tracks, subject to the assessment process outlined in the general track network policies, completion of a landscape development plan for the 268 Ohariu Valley Road property and the open space provision outcomes of the Upper Stebbings Valley Structure Plan, focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connections from Churton Park Reserves to ridgetop loop tracks and then to Ohariu Valley Road • Connector tracks from Upper Stebbings Valley to Sector 1. 	N	3-5 yrs
		N	5-10 yrs
2.	Explore the possibility of gaining public access across the Transpower land between Old Coach Road and Ohariu Valley Road.	N	1-2 yrs
3.	Investigate the options for safe access across Ohariu Valley Road from the Transpower land to 268 Ohariu Valley Road.	N	1-2 yrs
4.	Explore opportunity to connect the (about) 2km gap in the Skyline Track between 944 Ohariu Valley block and the new land at 268 Ohariu Valley Road.	N	1-2 yrs

Entrances, facilities and way-finding

5.	Develop a main entrance at the 268 Ohariu Valley Road land, subject to Action 5.2.2.3 (2) above.	N	3-5 yrs
6.	Subject to potential local link tracks being developed from streets in the area, install way-finding signage appropriate to secondary entrances.	N	3-5 yrs

Dog walking

7.	Make provision for dog exercise areas when planning the future reserve network in this sector.	N	1-2 yrs
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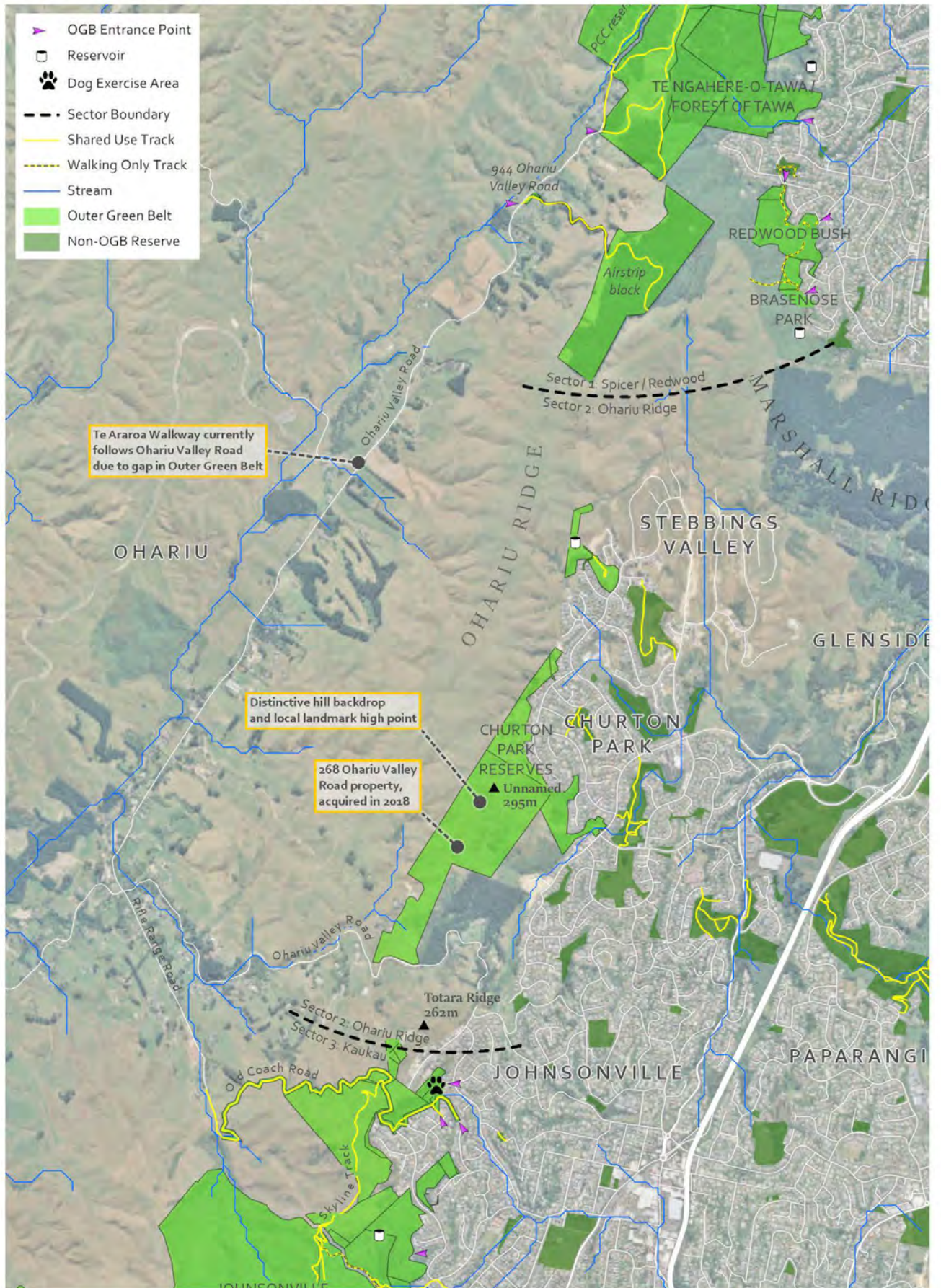
5.2.2.6 Community and identity

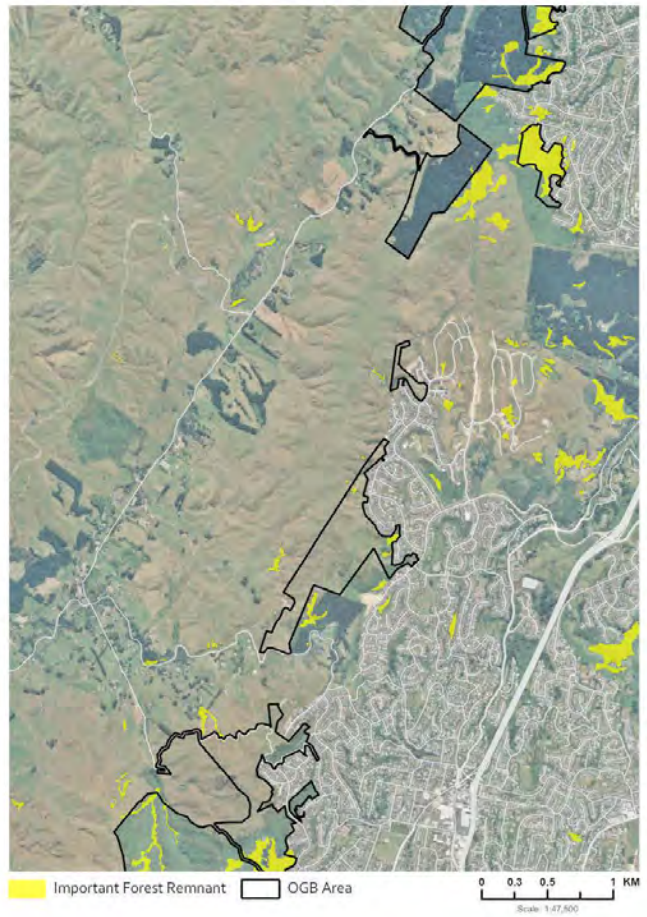
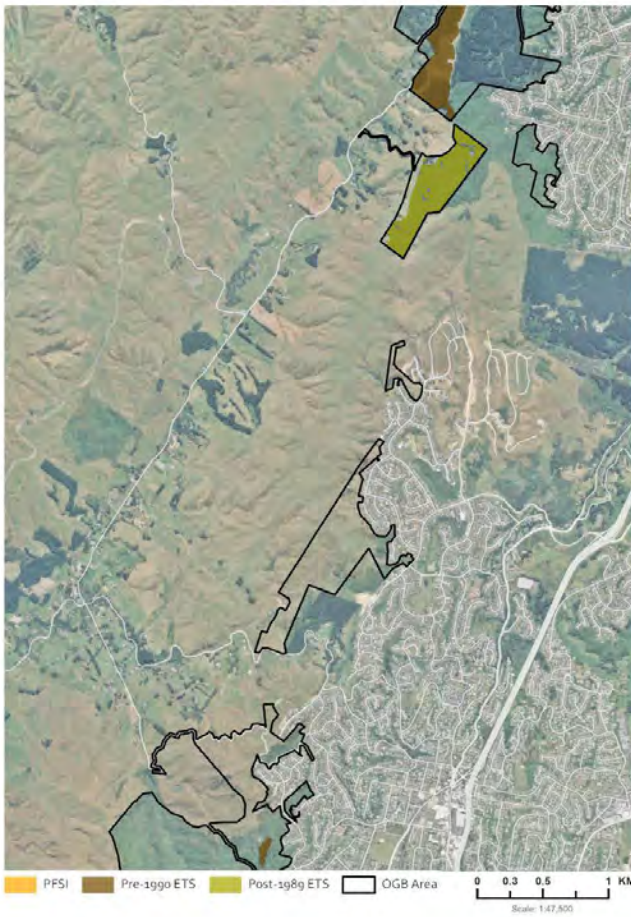
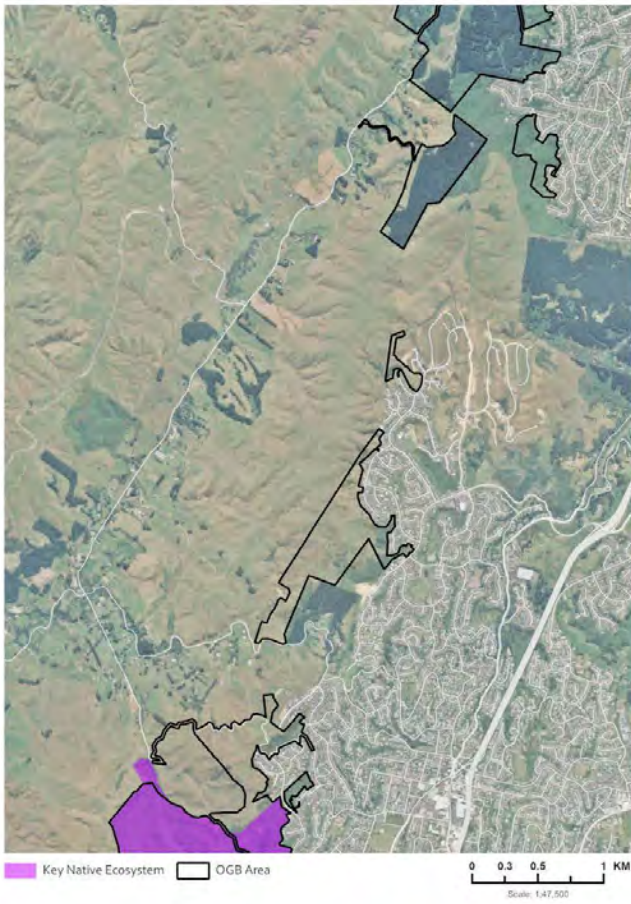
Community

1.	Explore opportunities to engage with and facilitate partnerships within the community to help look after and develop the growing Outer Green Belt reserve network in this sector, for example, care groups, special projects like a community plant nursery, track work.	Ex	Ongoing
2.	Continue to support and encourage neighbouring land owners to participate in local pest animal management/weed control/restoration planting on their land, especially where it will help protect streams or important native bush remnants and/or adjoins OGB reserves of high natural value or contains seed sources important for enhancing the OGB ecological corridor.	Ex	ongoing

Sector 2: Ohariu Ridge - Current

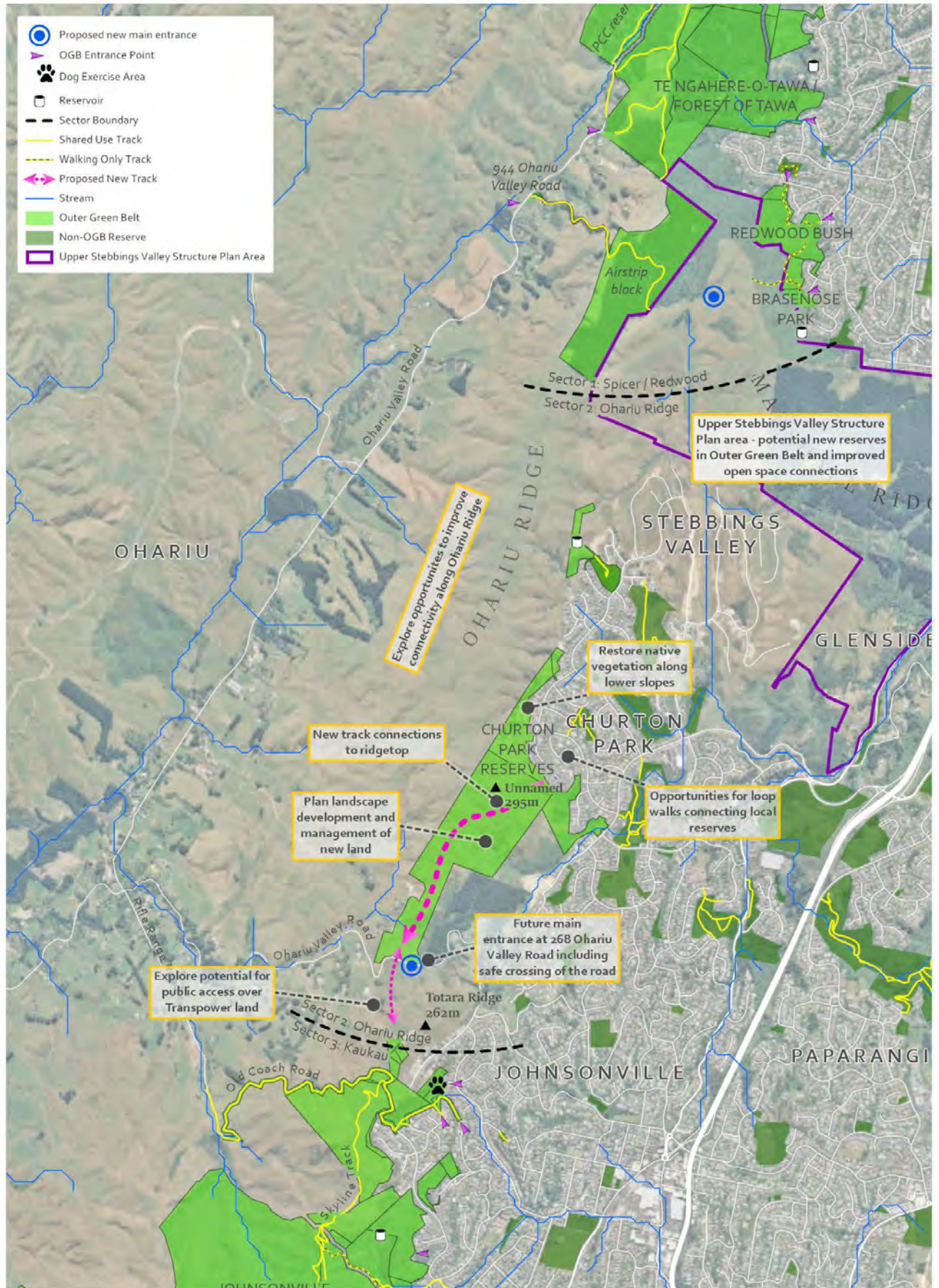
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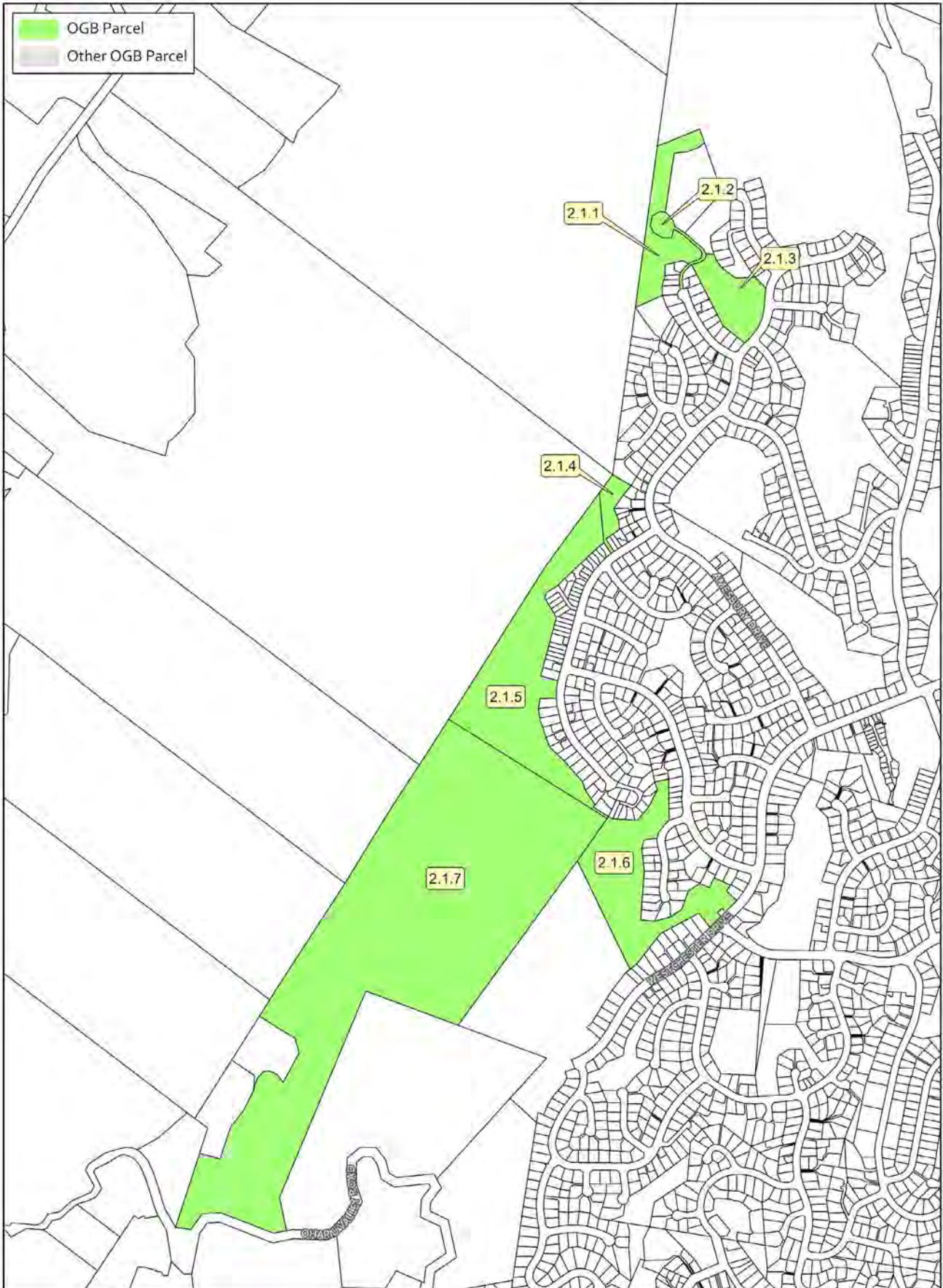
Sector 2: Ohariu Ridge - Future Initiatives

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Sector 2: Ohariu Ridge

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Management Sector 2: Ohariu Ridge: Land schedule*

Gazette Reserve Name (may differ from WCC name)**	Mapping Reference	WCC Site number	Legal Description	Record of Title / Parcel Id	Land Area	Reserve Description	NZ Gazette Notice Reference	District Plan Zoning	Notes	Actions needed
Stebbings Reservoir	2.11	3763	Lot 2 DP 470218	640885	1.9610 ha	Not classified	Vested to Wellington City Council on deposit of DP 470218 as scenic reserve	Open Space B	New addition since 2004	Proposed Classification of Scenic Reserve (b)
Reserve name not found	2.12	3670	Lot 3 DP 470218	634728	0.3382 ha	Local Purpose		Open Space B		
Stebbings Reservoir	2.13	3762	Lot 1 DP 470218	640884	0.1587 ha	Not Classified		Open Space B	New addition since 2004	Proposed Classification of Scenic Reserve (b)
Churton Park Reserve	2.14	2506	Lot 200 DP 314946	58953	0.5219 ha	Scenic Reserve (b)	Gaz 2013 p3955 (LINZ regis # 9561291.3)	Open Space B		
To be determined	2.15	3195	Lot 20 DP 399583	408295	6.6862 ha	Not classified		Open Space B		Proposed Classification of Scenic Reserve (b)
Reserve name not found	2.16	3196	Lot 14 DP 435672		4.4765 ha	Vested for Scenic Reserve		Open Space B	New addition since 2004	Classify as Scenic Reserve (b)
To be determined	2.17		Lot 1 DP 508648		31.860 ha	Not classified		Rural	This land was recently purchased by Wellington City Council	Proposed Classification of Scenic Reserve (b)

* Land schedule information is as at November 2019

** The reserve name that appeared in the NZ Gazette notice was the name used for the particular land parcel at the time of gazetting. It may or may not match the name WCC uses for a group of adjoining reserves, in on-site signs or in other WCC information systems.