

Auckland City Centre Resident's Group

Submission from Auckland City Centre Residents' Group on:

Changes to Freyberg Place - Pedestrian Mall

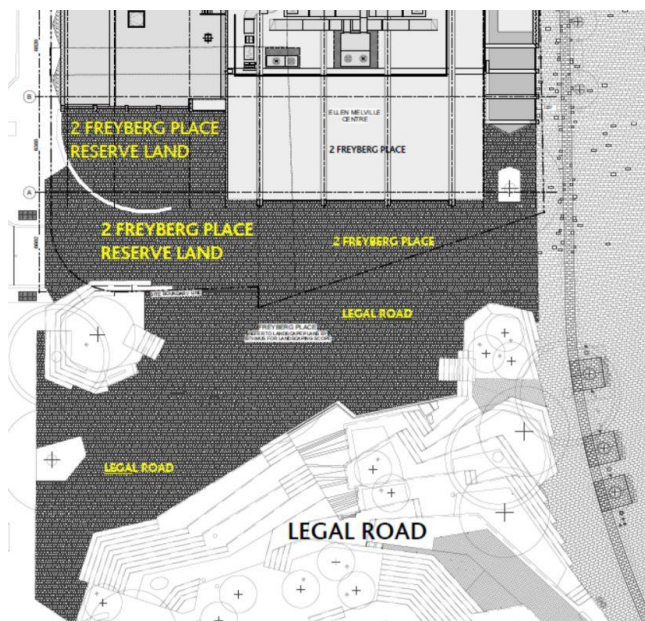
Background

Auckland Transport (AT) and Auckland Council (AC) are proposing changes to Freyberg Place, and have released a Statement of Proposal (SOP).

CCRG, having two seats representing residents on the Auckland City Centre Advisory Board (ACCAB), have also been provided advice from Council, including the 3 November 2017 Memo: 'Freyberg Place, Central Auckland – Traffic Management through Square'.

The recently completed Ellen Melville Centre and the reserve Land on Freyberg Place is a council asset. A section of one-way legal road (under AT control) traverses the square on a west/east axis, and currently permits vehicular traffic through from High Street to Courthouse Lane.

The only element compromising the entire space is the existence of through traffic that disrupts the pedestrian flow from, and to, the Ellen Melville Centre - and more so for young children and the less abled. Most of the space used for through traffic is a designated reserve, and is not on the same path as the legal road.



Auckland Transport proposes to change this to a pedestrian mall, which is only accessible to pedestrians and people on bicycles, and does not allow the driving or parking of any vehicle.

AT propose specific exemptions to this which include:

- Emergency service vehicles
- Authorised vehicles (with prior permission from AT)

A new legal status of Freyberg place would provide a safer environment for pedestrians and people on bicycles and provide a stronger connection between the Ellen Melville Centre and the square. The proposal also addresses historical property boundaries, where the roadway currently crosses over areas of council-owned property.

Context

Over the past two years, approx \$7million of CCTR funds have been spent for the specific purpose of improving Freyberg Place and immediate surrounds, for city dwellers and workers.

Freyberg Place has become a welcome (and rare) oasis in the city centre where residents can gather and relax. Freyberg Place is one of the key public spaces in the middle of the city centre providing a warm, sheltered, quiet and sunny space to enjoy, particularly during winter months. has become a much-valued and cherished community centre for residents. Residents and others are keen to make fuller use of Freyberg Place as an events and community space for residents.

The whole area now flows very well into the upgraded Ellen Melville Centre and from the Centre the open view out to the square is a key feature of both facilities. Yet this peace, tranquillity and safety is currently undermined by the access that vehicles currently still are legally entitled to across Freyberg Place.

The retention of the large Phoenix palms provides an excellent visual barrier to the very tall neighbouring Metropolis building on the southern boundary.

The ACCAB Memo of 3.11.17, and various other discussion at ACCAB have underlined that there are two options:

1. Pedestrian Mall
2. Road Stopped (and vested in AC as Reserve Land)

CCRG's understanding is that the legal status Pedestrian Mall is a variation or 'change of use' for a road and sits legally under the 'Legal Road' designation, with control vested in AT.

The Problem

We are aware that when ACCAB funding was being considered for the upgrade work, an agreement was made that satisfied the access concerns from Heart of the City and other business interests.

We understand the need for this temporary arrangement and support the agreement that over time vehicle access would change from 'mainly open' to 'mainly closed'.

CCRG is very supportive of AT's SOP for closing Freyberg Place to vehicular traffic, for the reasons outlined both in the SOP and our own, above. And we accept that a change of legal status is required to enable our and city centre goals and aspirations for Freyberg Place and the Ellen Melville Centre.

Taking this into consideration we do not support the current proposal to designate the area as a pedestrian mall for the following reasons –

- The legal road has not been required for decades and is unlikely to be required in the future, so it should be stopped – that is the clean and permanent solution for this space.
- Auckland Council owns and manages the reserve land and buildings associated with the Ellen Melville Centre, and have upgraded both buildings and public space from their funding sources.
- That situation is unlikely to change given that Ellen Melville is now a purpose-designed community facility used for a wide range of community interests.

- There is a confusion of legal statuses for the whole Freyberg Place area, with two entities AT and AC, controlling different aspects and areas, as per their respective legal mandate.
- The SOP states :“*Both Auckland Council and Auckland Transport will manage and monitor access of authorised vehicles by way of retractable bollards.*” - This will inevitably lead to inefficiencies.
- Auckland Transport has no real interest in the area for any transport-related functions, so it makes sense that the entire space is owned and managed by Auckland Council as public recreation space.

We recommend instead that the unformed legal road be stopped, as provided for under s342 and Schedule 10 of the Local Government Act 1974, and vested in Auckland Council as a Local Purpose Reserve under s23 of the Reserves Act 1977.

- This facilitates the integrated management by one entity, Auckland Council, of a city centre public space for the purposes it was designed to accommodate.
- The existing space that is used for through traffic could, and should remain, with provision made for this in the Reserve designation.
- Given the location, and the very narrow profile of High Street, it is considered prudent to allow emergency access for vehicles in the event of an incident further along High Street.
- In that regard, there is no need to change any of the existing arrangements as Auckland Council has the capacity to specify the type of vehicle access they will permit as part of the reserve designation.

Using this process, in preference to the Pedestrian Mall proposal, is likely to take longer but there is no hurry for the change to take place. The agreement of vehicle access going from ‘mostly open’ to ‘mostly closed’ can then be managed over time which was the original intention and it is important that this is respected.

Road Stopping would provide for two issues critical to residents:

- Clarity and consistency around the legal status and **management** of Freyberg Place, and therefore
- **Cost and management Efficiencies** around residents’ and other groups’ future usage of Freyberg Place for community, neighbourhood and business events.

We would like to see a longer-term vision now applied to this matter.

Only Road Stopping and vesting the land as reserve land controlled by AC, provides the stated aim of the SOP.

We would like to see clarity around a total solution that future proofs Freyberg Place and replaces the roadway legal framework with one that provides much more consistency and flexibility around ease of access, usage, vested in one controlling agency. All while adhering to the spirit and intent of existing agreements.

A pedestrian Mall status does not enable this. Road Stopping provides all of those.

We wish to be heard in support of this submission.

Adam Parkinson

Secretary

CCRG

www.ccr.org.nz

021 766 095