

Freedom Camping Consultation

1. Freedom camping at Madill's Farm is completely inappropriate. This park is currently closed and locked overnight to all vehicles. It was not closed on a whim, but to address serious historic problems. Those problems included vehicles damaging playing fields, burnouts in the car park, excessive noise, threatening behaviour and drug use. Since the park has been closed overnight, these problems have disappeared. Clearly freedom camping is incompatible with a closed and locked park, and so designation as a freedom camping area would require reopening the park overnight, which would also reopen the park to the serious problems of the past. It is hard to understand why the Council would even consider this.
2. It also seems inappropriate to encourage freedom camping on property immediately backing onto residential properties such as at Madill's Farm. While the proposal includes fairly tight conditions, it seems highly unlikely that the Council or police will have sufficient resource or intent to enforce them. Given that there will be a large number of freedom camping sites scattered throughout Auckland, it will be virtually impossible to ensure that there are never more than 2 campers at a time at Madill's Farm. Tight conditions might sound good, but they are virtually unenforceable.
3. Under the proposal, freedom camping would be permitted anywhere unless specifically prohibited. The only prohibitions seem to be for Council-owned parks and reserves, which leaves freedom camping legal everywhere else. That appears to include all streets, whether residential, commercial or otherwise. Auckland's streets should not be turned into a giant freedom camping area. Neither residents nor businesses want freedom campers directly outside their houses and premises, particularly unregulated non-self-contained vehicles that pose a risk to health and safety. And yet there are no controls proposed at all to restrict or regulate camping on roads.
4. We are unable to see any distinction in the proposal between freedom camping and homeless sleeping in cars. This proposal therefore appears to legalise sleeping in cars in virtually any location in Auckland regardless of suitability and impact on local residents and businesses. This can't be right.
5. We support freedom camping in appropriate locations where these can be controlled to ensure that they do not adversely impact the community. The only way to practically control activities is to designate freedom camping areas, apply appropriate controls to these areas, and then enforce them. It is not practical to impose controls on a few specific areas while leaving every other area open to uncontrolled freedom camping.
6. We support having more freedom camping areas subject to excluding freedom camping from areas not specifically designated as suitable for freedom camping.
7. If there are controls over freedom camping, then violations of those controls must have consequences. We support changing the bylaw in order to allow enforcement and fines.
8. Non-self-contained vehicles should be excluded from camping at any location not within say 100m of 24 hour toilets. The proposal, however, does not appear to be as clear cut, and

appears to apply only to designated areas, not everywhere. We strongly believe that the rule needs to apply everywhere.

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10. The proposal is not specific about the distance to toilets. Commercial campgrounds generally have toilets within 100-150m of all sites because any further and residents would be tempted to make other arrangements. Freedom campers will similarly balance convenience and hygiene, and for distances beyond 100m convenience may well win out. We therefore recommend that non-self-contained camping be excluded from all areas more than 100m from 24 hr public toilets.

11. We are reasonably comfortable with this proposal, although there may be local reasons to vary this. For example, if campers were to camp in commuter parking areas, they should move on before the parks are required by commuters. Conversely, in an area which only gets busy later in the day, then a later time may be acceptable.

12. We assume that local parking restrictions such as no parking between 7am and 9am, or a 2 hour limit between 8am and 6pm would override any times set in the freedom camping bylaw. This needs to be confirmed. If so, then a 10am departure might be appropriate, with an earlier time enforced where appropriate through local parking restrictions as for all other vehicles.

13. We support Selwyn Reserve being an exclusion zone, but wonder why the parking lot at the western end of the reserve is not excluded. Most of the reserve is already closed to vehicles, and so prohibiting freedom camping is pointless there. The only area open to vehicles is not part of the exclusion zone, which makes very little sense. Effectively this means that freedom camping is permitted at Selwyn Reserve with no restrictions.

14. We believe that the parking lots should be included in the exclusion zone.

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Some parts of Tamaki Drive may be quite suitable for freedom camping, particularly for self-contained vehicles, but because the proposed bylaw does not seek to control camping on roads, there is no way to impose conditions here. Without any controls, freedom camping on Tamaki Drive could get out of control and yet nothing could be done to limit numbers or durations. Attractive areas such as this should have designated areas subject to conditions which would allow camping to be managed rather than be open slather.

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We are concerned that conditions imposed are unlikely to be enforced. While the proposed bylaw includes fairly tight conditions on designated areas, it seems highly unlikely that the Council or police will have sufficient resource or intent to enforce them. Given that there will be a large number of freedom camping sites scattered throughout Auckland, it will be virtually impossible to ensure that there are never more than 2 campers at a time at Madill's Farm, for example, nor that campers leave by 9am. Tight conditions might sound good, but they are virtually unenforceable.