

Te Ara O Hei- "The Path of Hei" (Coromandel Walks) - Project Fact Sheet # 4

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR A CAR PARK AT LEES ROAD

The Hahei community is divided on the walks project and associated car park location in spite of a comprehensive consideration of alternatives and significant consultation over the last few months. Many residents and ratepayers want to see improved management of traffic during the summer months in Hahei, while the Hahei Business Association and community are commercially focused and have different motivations and aspirations.

Tourist numbers and the associated traffic congestion and infrastructure issues during summer months in Hahei Village have been long standing issues over the past decade. The 2005 Hahei Community Plan identified the need to better manage and facilitate tourist growth and development identifying key infrastructure upgrades to manage traffic within the village. Out of this document came the community-led park and ride service and car park at Pa Road (Hahei Village Entrance car park), which has been operating since 2009.

A number of studies over the past decade, including the DOC Reserves Management Plan, Hahei traffic management plans and various community plans all suggest the need for a park and ride as well as additional parking facilities.

A recent peer review by Hahei communities' Traffic Management Group on the 2016 MWH traffic report was completed. The report forecasted doubling of traffic numbers over the next 5 years and highlights the need to expand the park and ride facility and provide another car park outside Hahei Village. The proposed Lee's Road car park will help to alleviate congestion issues in the village and provide desperately needed additional parking at peak times.

There is a clear conflict within the community between locating the car park in or near the village versus out of Hahei (Lee's Road). The Walks project team have concluded that the Lees Road car park benefits **both** tourism and infrastructure and importantly provides additional revenue from visitors, which will help to fund maintenance and infrastructure needed in Hahei in the future.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - LEES ROAD CAR PARK

Do we need an additional car park and should it be located in Lee's Road rather than adjacent the village?

The independent Visitor and Traffic report undertaken by MWH identifies the need for additional car parking to accommodate existing and projected visitor numbers heading to Cathedral Cove, regardless of any additional demand generated by the Walks Project. Even with the Hahei Village Entrance car park expansion to accommodate existing parking demands generated by tourists visiting Cathedral Cove, additional spaces are required.

The introduction of Lees Road car park and expansion at the Hahei Village Entrance car park, together with the continuation of the summer time Park and Ride service, are key facilities which should be introduced as soon as possible. To meet demand by 2021, the existing supply of parking within Hahei will not be sufficient and both the proposed 200 space car park at the Hahei Village Entrance and 500 space car parks at Lees Road are required regardless of whether or not the Walks Project is progressed.

The proposed Lees Road car park introduces an alternative entry point to Cathedral Cove and provides for much needed additional car parking spaces to cater for existing and future visitor demand to Cathedral Cove. It also provides a solution to reduce Hahei village congestion issues in the summer months, while still retaining a strong connection with Hahei village through a proposed shuttle service and walking connection from Lees Road to Hahei via the existing Cathedral Cove walkway.

Putting the car park at Lees Road will also help bring forward much-needed roading infrastructure upgrades, including widening and sealing of the road to the car park and safety improvements to the intersection with Lees Road and Hahei Road. The walks project also provides the opportunity to bring forward the Lees Road dust seal up to the Stella Evered Reserve, which is already a popular destination.

How will the Lees Road car park specifically benefit and future-proof the Walks project and associated infrastructure?

The car park and access track at Lees Road is the only site investigated that gives convenient alternative easy walking access to Cathedral Cove.

The car park and access track at Lees Road is the only site short-listed that is relatively central, with the same walking distance as the Grange Road car park. The access track has a much easier grade (i.e. it has moderate steepness) and should be less costly to develop than the like.

Lees Road car park provides an alternative car park for those tourists wanting to make a quick stop at Cathedral Cove before travelling on to other tourist places in New Zealand. Lees Road car park accommodates this type of visitor and helps to alleviate vehicle traffic in the Village.

The car park at Lees Road and new track to Cathedral Cove also helps to "join the dots" via Purangi Crossing then ultimately through to Whitianga. Creating a walkway and supporting shuttle service helps give visitors the option of walking to and from Hahei to Cooks beach and beyond, rather than taking their cars. Revenue from the Lees Road car park will contribute directly back into walks maintenance and district infrastructure projects.

Why is Lees Road car park the best option from a cost and benefit point of view?

The Lees Road car park is not on high value land compared to sites closer to Hahei. The land is part lower value/productive farm land than many other sites considered.

There is only one landowner involved for both track and car park, and the proposed site is suitable for both the alternative access track and car park to Cathedral Cove. The easement costs are substantially lower when compared to land value. To add to this the landowner is sharing the risk on the forecasted car park revenue, so will be motivated to help make the site succeed. The negotiated deal is in line with win-win principles and both parties are working together to make the site succeed, while sharing the risk.

Why don't we put the car park closer to Hahei Village?

The Hahei Village Entrance car park is already highly congested during peak summer months, but is relatively well-disguised by existing vegetation and its location.

Creation of a larger car park near Hahei may reduce the visual appeal to the village entrance, and could also limit development opportunities for the village. Residents and ratepayers in particular have made this position clear and it is also backed by MWH report stating that a large car park near Hahei will also further exacerbate traffic issues on Hahei Beach Road. Building a large car park on high value potential development land that may be empty half of the year is not seen to be the best use of the land.

If we put another car park in Hahei, a shuttle will still be needed to get users up to Grange Road to get to Cathedral Cove. Grange Road is already significantly congested during peak times.

DOC and Ngati Hei have advised that Grange Road car park is soon to be set up as a drop off only zone and ultimately Ngati Hei want to see it closed as a car park. This places greater pressure on additional car parking and traffic management of Hahei Road. The Hahei Village Entrance car park will provide some additional parking. However it does not address traffic issues into the Village and will not provide an alternative access to Cathedral Cove if and when Grange Road car park closes.

A new car park on the outside of the Village (e.g. 100 Acre Block) would be on prime development land, currently proposed for re-zoning. As such land values are high making a car parking development less likely to provide best investment for Council.

In the future when the property and structure plan issues have been sorted, the Hahei Village Entrance car park could potentially be expanded further, when the walking track between the Blowhole and Hot Water Beach is completed. If this were to happen, the issue of congestion on Hahei Beach Road would need to be considered as part of the design.

Will the location of the Lees Road car park take business away from Hahei?

Hahei Village will still remain a tourist destination/hub particularly with the introduction of a new tourist attraction to the Blowhole. The proposed car parking infrastructure at Lees Road, will help to spread the projected increased visitor number load and ultimately help to reduce congestion in the village. The Lees Road car park will also cater for those tick box' visitors who tend not to spend time/money in the village anyway, and will help to take these additional vehicle trips away from the village.

A shuttle service will provide connections back to Hahei from the Lees Road car park. Additionally, as part of the walk project, there will be an extended tourist offering, with a new walkway south of Hahei Village to the blow hole. With visitors likely to use the Village Entrance Car Park to access this part of the walk, it is anticipated that business will continue reap benefits for many years to come.

In winter, the Project Board have indicated they may consider off-peak initiatives to attract people back into Hahei. One such initiative could involve changing the signage (by installing fold-down signs), to direct people back to the Hahei Village Entrance car park over the winter months. This initiative, if accepted, could provide a suitable compromise to help support Hahei businesses during the quiet months.

The information provided at the Lees Road car park kiosk will also educate walks users about the many attractions in and around Hahei and this in itself adds a further opportunity to promote Hahei Village.

Other initiatives could include promotional material and advertising of Hahei businesses on suitable mediums. For example, pay n display tickets may be able to have printing on the back promoting specific services to bring people into the village. e.g. "buy one get one free vouchers."

Will there be shops and other commercial activities at the new Lees Road car park?

An information kiosk will be built at the Lees Road car park. The kiosk will provide information to visitors as well as a location where people can book tours in Hahei Village and elsewhere, as well as view shuttle service times and other important information. The kiosk will have a toilet block which will service walkers at the start for the track. It is intended that the kiosk will also provide refreshments for walkers with a seated area and kitchen for food preparation and will be staffed for up to 5 staff in the summer period. No other commercial activities are proposed as part of this application. If any other services were to be established, these would be separate from the walk and initiated solely by the landowner and would be subject to the usual resource consenting process.

How much will the Lee's Road car park cost?

- The estimated cost to build the Lee's Road car park (Stage 1) is \$1.34M including easement payments, design, consenting, build and contingencies. The revenue model forecasts the costs of the carpark will be paid back after 6 years. After years 6 the additional revenue from the car park will go towards tracks maintenance and future district infrastructure improvements.