

## 12. PARK TERRACE LANDSCAPE VISION

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The purpose of this report is to inform the Board on the landscape planning that has taken place for the Park Terrace Avon River corridor.

### INTRODUCTION

The stretch of Avon River alongside Park Terrace is a significant area of Christchurch with a definite landscape character. The character is primarily determined by the meandering Avon River, the woodland trees of Hagley Park and the sweeping, open lawns with large weeping willows along Park Terrace.

For some time Parks and Waterways staff have been aware of the need for a landscape plan for the Avon River banks from the Carlton Mill Bridge to the Hagley Park Armagh Street entrance. A number of willow trees have been removed from the riverbank over the last few years due to disease induced by the fungus *Armillaria*, storm damage and old age. Significant gaps along the river banks are now apparent and some of these have been filled with other species in a haphazard manner.

In line with the Hagley Park Management Plan (Part II, 1.0 Landscape, Policy 9) a detailed landscape plan has been prepared to address existing landscape issues and to take the area forward into the future by way of a vision developed with Christchurch residents.

### PLANNING AND CONSULTATION PROCESS

Parks and Waterways staff engaged local landscape architect Wayne Rimmer to prepare a landscape analysis and background information as the basis for discussion with staff and residents.

A thorough consultation process was carried out (refer to attached summary). The need for a vision for Park Terrace and the up and coming consultation process was highlighted twice last year in City Scene. Interested residents had the opportunity to receive information by leaving their name and contact details with the Parks and Waterways Unit.

At the end of November an information board was placed on site near the Burns Bridge and two walks were conducted, each with expert speakers on landscape character, the fungus *Armillaria* which is affecting the trees, and more generally on health and longevity of trees in Christchurch. Paul Dickson from the Parks and Waterways Unit was available to answer questions on hydrology and in stream values on one of the walks. Each walk attracted about 15 interested people and took approximately three hours. Participants were given written information and a questionnaire.

The material was mailed out to others who had phoned earlier in the year as well to as key interest groups. Comments from 36 residents were sent back in to the Council and from these and the comments received on the walks a draft landscape plan with development and management recommendations was prepared. The draft landscape plan and recommendations were then sent back to those on the mailing list and further feedback as to whether people agreed or disagreed with the proposals has been summarised.

From the consultation carried out, it was clear at an early stage that the existing character of weeping willows and clear views to the water and beyond to Hagley Park were highly valued by residents. Many talked of the area having high visual amenity and significant heritage value as well as being one of Christchurch's "iconic" landscapes. There was a clear mandate to build on these values through the preparation of a landscape plan that could be endorsed by Council to ensure that any new planting within the area was consistent with the area's attributes.

On Page 54 of the Hagley Park Management Plan 1991, Policy 9 it is stated that

"A comprehensive "Design Specification" shall be prepared for Hagley Park in accordance with the Landscape Character Analysis.....The intent of the Design Specification is to ensure that the park is understood and recorded on formal plans and that the conservation of these values is recognised in all aspects of management and design for the park. For example the tree replacement programme."

## KEY COMPONENTS OF THE LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR PARK TERRACE

Several attributes of the draft plan were endorsed by most submitters:

1. Retention of the open parkland character of Park Terrace and of the sedges lining the river's edge.
2. Retention of the predominantly willow parkland theme by way of a programme which gradually replaced the existing willows as they decline with carefully selected, grown-on and treated stock.
3. Improved maintenance of the Hagley Park riverbanks with low shrub planting on steep banks which are difficult to maintain.
4. Removal of clump of native species and *Gleditsia* near the Carlton Mill Bridge.
5. Removal of the bedding plants beneath the flagpoles opposite Kilmore Street.
6. Addition of one or two other tree species to highlight bridges, adding occasional purple beech to continue theme from Rolleston Avenue to the Carlton Mill bridge.
7. Addition of a small number of carefully sited seats and bins on both sides of the river but not cluttering the area with other structures.

While not all submitters agreed on the treatment of the steeper banks and areas closer to the bridge abutments which at present are difficult to maintain and often look unkempt and weed infested, Parks and Waterways staff recommend that these areas could in some places be recontoured and regrassed while other selected areas could be planted in low-growing shrubs or grasses.

The Hagley Park Management Plan Part II Policy Section 4.0 Avon River states that when dealing with bank stabilisation that this be "in keeping with the setting and the high visual value of the Avon River". The relevant policies in this instance in considering methods to stabilise banks are :

- "Policy 1 Where stabilisation of banks is required, natural methods such as regrading of banks and planting shall be used in preference to artificial walling.....
- Policy 4 Native riparian vegetation shall be allowed in appropriate sections of the Avon River and its tributaries where the cultivated "English" character is not compromised.....
- Policy 5 Bulbs and flowering species shall be planted along the Park Terrace edges....
- Policy 9 All bank stabilisation works carried out on the Avon River and its tributaries through Hagley Park shall take into account the health and habitats of fish and other wildlife."

On site discussion about the ecological value of the *Carex secta* which lines parts of the river's edge enabled people to recognise that it was important for the sedges to remain to provide habitat and immediate shade for water wildlife. Indeed, the Hagley Park Management Plan recognises that "*Carex* and other naturally occurring native species provide stability to the bank and enhance the appearance and ecology of the river".

However, the area of native planting near the Carlton Mill Bridge seems to annoy some submitters as it seems totally at odds with the character of the area, blocks views of the river and in their view looks untidy. Originally planted to stabilise an eroding section of the riverbank the planting does offer some benefit in erosion control and in habitat value. Several submitters strongly recommended that this planting be retained and not removed as proposed by the draft landscape plan.

Parks and Waterways Staff believe that the clump of native species is clearly out of place in terms of the landscape character of the stretch of the Avon River along Park Terrace. We recommend that the planting be removed and replanted with smaller shrubs as per the landscape plan attached. A compromise could be that the flaxes and other shrubs be removed but the cabbage trees which have long tap roots facilitating stabilisation could be retained as in time their canopies will allow views through to the river.

## **CONCLUSION**

The landscape plan and accompanying development and management recommendations for the Avon riverbanks along Park Terrace reinforces the existing landscape character of the area and seeks to address areas which are currently difficult to manage. The main component of the area's character is that of weeping willows which despite their susceptibility to attack by an endemic fungus are valued to such a degree by residents that all practical measures should be taken to control the effects of the disease on replacement willows. It is highly desirable that for the Park Terrace Avon River landscape the open, park-like character should be preserved for future generations to enjoy.

**Recommendation:** That the Board support the landscape plan

### **Chairman's**

**Recommendation:** Not seen by the chairperson.