

## 11. OWEN MITCHELL PARK – PROPOSED PLAYGROUND

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The purpose of this report is to update the Board on the proposed play equipment for Owen Mitchell Park, following consultation with local residents.

### BACKGROUND

Owen Mitchell Park functions as a district park for northeast Christchurch, with a large fort structure currently on the park that does not meet new safety regulations. The Redwood area has many reserves with smaller scale play equipment aimed toward younger children. Therefore, it is proposed to build a play structure at Owen Mitchell Park that challenges older children, while still offering play opportunities for others.

Board Members will recall the initial plan for the reserve showed the removal of the existing playground with the play structure sited slightly east of this. It was deemed too costly to modify the existing playground to bring it up to required safety specifications. The re-development also showed all- weather paths crossing the front of the park and up to the play area, plus the thinning and relocation of trees and shrubbery within the park as part of a tree management plan.

The proposed plan was tabled at the 17 March 2003 seminar meeting of the Shirley/Papanui Community Board with the recommendation that the plan be circulated to local residents for their comments and feedback.

### COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

A public information leaflet (attached) showing a concept plan of the proposed landscaping enhancements was distributed to the community for comment. Owen Mitchell Park's natural community boundaries were assessed as being inside the boundaries of Prestons Road/Main North Road/Queen Elizabeth II Drive/Grimseys Road and led to an information circulation of approximately 950. The return rate for the landscaping enhancement information was 92 written replies.

Key features of the feedback received from the PIL response included:

- Many respondents commented that the number of swings proposed should be increased
- There was a positive response to thinning out the shrubbery closest to the play structure
- There was a general consensus that adding picnic tables and extra seats would enhance the family atmosphere
- Residents on the south side of Owen Mitchell Park were pleased with the tree management plan
- Some comment queried the safety aspects of the proposed play equipment – specifically the flying fox

### DISCUSSION

The majority of respondents indicated a preference for swings as the extra item to be added. Many added that two plus swings should be put in for families with multiple children. Generally, a two-swing structure is standard and Parks and Waterways will look at the feasibility of adding one more. Extra picnic tables around the play equipment will be added to increase the family-friendly atmosphere and enable adults supervising their children to have a suitable view of the children playing.

The Parks and Waterways Unit followed the recommendation of the Board and conducted a safety audit of the proposal through safety in urban design accredited staff in the Urban Design Unit. The completed safety audit agreed with the proposal to lift and thin out the shrubbery surrounding the fort to improve sightlines both from the road and back from the sport-fields. There was a high level of support from the community for work to occur in this area, as it has been the subject of concern for some time. The safety audit also recommends placing the play equipment in the same spot as the existing fort and Staff have redesigned the plan to reflect this.

Council staff organised a site meeting on Saturday 24 May in order to hear any feedback from residents. All who attended endorsed the idea of the playground redevelopment and the tree management plan proposed for the park. There were some initial concerns regarding the safety of the flying fox and the potential for it to provide a noisy attraction for youth at night. Staff agreed to investigate the possibility of having the flying fox locked at night.

**PLAN AMENDMENTS**

The Parks and Waterways Unit recommend placing the new playground on the same site and orientation as the existing play fort. This will fulfil the requirements of the safety audit.

**DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND FUTURE FUNDING**

The Parks and Waterways Unit will be able to fund all of this development in the 2003/04 financial year through the Capital Works Programme.

The Parks and Waterways Unit anticipate that the redevelopment of Owen Mitchell Park may occur in stages depending on the availability of contractors. Should this be the case, stage one will incorporate the new playground, with stage two finishing the plan with associated landscaping treatment in the spring planting season and the formation of the pathways. The tree management plan will also be staged to fit with planting seasons and the contractor's programme, but will occur over the same time- frame.

The Parks and Waterways Unit 5 year Capital Works Programme has allocated the following for Owen Mitchell Park:

<b>2003/04</b>	<b>\$60,000</b>	<b>Parks &amp; Waterways Capital Works Programme – Owen Mitchell Park Playground</b>
<b>2003/04</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>	<b>Parks &amp; Waterways Capital Works Programme – Major Parks Tree Replacement Projects</b>
<b>2003/04</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>Parks &amp; Waterways Sports Park Maintenance</b>
<b>2003/04</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>Parks &amp; Waterways Capital Works Programme – New Pathway Formation</b>
<b>2003/04</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>City Streets Unit – New Pathway Formation</b>

**CONCLUSION**

The renewal of the play equipment and addition of picnic seating, teamed with the tree management plan will provide a family-friendly atmosphere and create an area that will be a focal point for the community.

The local residents seem very enthusiastic to see work commence on Owen Mitchell Park and are confident that the redevelopment will provide improved recreational opportunities for the area.

**Staff**

- Recommendations:**
1. That the Board approve the thinning and lifting of the shrubbery surrounding the site of the play area in accordance with the results of the public consultation and safety audit.
  2. That the Board approve the proposed amendments to the playground redevelopment plan for Owen Mitchell Park.
  3. That the Board approve the tree management plan proposed for Owen Mitchell Park.

**Chairperson's**

- Recommendation:**
1. That staff recommendations 1 and 3 be adopted.
  2. That the Board approve the proposed amendments to the playground redevelopment plan for Owen Mitchell park with the inclusion of an additional swing.