

22. RICHMOND PARK – PROPOSED LANDSCAPE ENHANCEMENT

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The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of the response received from public consultation on the proposed landscape enhancement for Richmond Park.

BACKGROUND

Richmond Park functions as a sports' park for lower grade cricket and rugby, with Shirley Tennis Club and Shirley Bowling Club adjacent to the main park site. There is a small play structure catering for younger children on the park which is apparently well used by the neighbourhood. Marion College borders Richmond Park to the north and east, with foot and cycle traffic crossing the park to access the college and other local schools.

The Parks and Waterways Unit recently purchased a Medway Street property as part of the 'Safer Parks Strategy' to create better access through and improve visibility into the previously under-utilised southern section of the park. This land has recently been sown in grass and is awaiting finalisation of an overall concept plan for Richmond Park. The Parks and Waterways Unit has \$5,000 in this year's budget for landscaping work proposed for the new Medway Street entrance, plus a sum allocated toward the creation of an overall park concept plan and the public consultation associated with this.

PROPOSAL

The aim of the proposed redevelopment was to differentiate the areas used for sports purposes from those areas used for predominantly passive recreation. Some of the key features of the proposal were:

- Separating pedestrian/cycle movement from vehicles by the construction of all-weather path networks that link to existing facilities.
- Extend the existing asphalt area to create 34 car park spaces inside the Woodchester Street entrance.
- Develop the Medway Street entrance for pedestrian/cycle access only.
- Redevelop the section of reserve to the south and east of Poulton Courts into passive recreation and family picnic areas.
- Planting of additional trees alongside the cricket pavilion to soften the appearances of the bowling club and tennis club buildings.
- Revamping the drinking fountain at the children's playground.

CONSULTATION

A public information leaflet (PIL) showing a concept plan of the proposed landscaping enhancements was distributed to the community for comment. As a medium sized local recreation area Richmond Park's natural community boundaries were assessed as being inside the North Parade/Medway Street/Banks Avenue block and led to an information circulation of approximately 250. The return rate for the landscaping enhancement information was 33 written replies (13.2%), which is reasonably high for a basic landscaping upgrade.

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

- Car and pedestrian conflict, including pedestrian desire lines which cross vehicle access points inappropriately and the lack of a clear demarcation for both users.
- Driver behaviour when accessing Richmond Park – speed is seen as an issue.
- Lighting for the new pathway to Medway Street.

- The addition of picnicking amenities was generally seen as a good idea, but it would be handy for most families to have the playground resited (closer) to take full advantage of both facilities.
- The Cricket Club mentioned that the position of new car parks and some of the proposed trees could prove to be a hazard.
- Some respondents queried the trees proposed for the Medway Street entrance. There was a fairly even split between those who wanted deciduous species and those who preferred evergreen species.

The flow of traffic appeared to be the most contentious issue for many respondents and, as an overall safety aspect to the park, deserves to be looked at very closely in a final design. Speed cannot be looked at in isolation to the other vehicle concerns by simply adding a traffic calming device, as this does not address associated features, such as the lack of visibility when entering/exiting etc. In the same vein, the proposed car parking at the Woodchester Street entrance works well in theory but the Cricket Club foresee that the cars will be in danger of flying cricket balls. While this parking will be reviewed, the planting of extra trees around the ground should not provide any more hazards to cricket players than the existing trees do.

The pathway through the new entrance in Medway Street will not be lighted, as per Parks and Waterways Unit Safer Parks Policy. Although this will be a busy thoroughfare during the day for school pedestrian/cycle traffic, there are two alternative Park entranceways into nearby streets that have street-lighting for night use.

Feedback received mentioned the advantages in having picnicking facilities and play equipment co-located. As well as being more family-friendly, there are the safety benefits of having parents able to observe children playing. This design aspect is being re-worked and it may be that some extra picnic tables are placed near the existing playground, or some play equipment re-sited as appropriate.

New trees proposed for the main park will be of the same species as the existing *Quercus robur*/*Quercus palustris* (English Oak/Pin Oak). The trees proposed for alongside the new path to Medway Street have not been decided upon and will need further consultation with those residents closest to the path. The only trees planted so far have been at the Medway Street entrance and these are the smaller deciduous *Acer* (Maple). The proposed shrub planting for this entrance are low growing exotics such as the camellia and azalea types interspersed with some natives.

WORK PROGRAM

Budget constraints for this proposal has meant that the only work planned for this year was the shrub planting at the Medway Street entrance. This work is programmed for the May/June 2003 planting season and will go ahead as scheduled given there was very little feedback received for this aspect of the redevelopment proposal.

As mentioned previously, the amount of feedback received on traffic/parking issues within Richmond Park deserves a closer study of how the park functions as a whole. This will include a review of the current lease-holders future requirements with an aim toward integrating park function and obtaining the best compromise for both casual park users and organised clubs. Once an overall evaluation is completed on Richmond Park, including all submissions from the public and park stakeholders, this information will be communicated to the local residents via a mail-out. Funding for any further redevelopment will be considered according to the requirements of a new plan.

CONCLUSION

The proposed landscaping changes for Richmond Park will provide a finished look and increase the perception of an attractive and safe environment. Feedback from the community toward the enhancement has generally been very supportive with the Parks and Waterways Unit attempting to address additional community concerns through the review of the park function. The local residents seem very enthusiastic to see work commence on their park and we are confident that the redevelopment will provide improved recreational opportunities for the local community.

Staff

Recommendation: That the information is received.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: For discussion.