

3. HAGLEY PARK AMPHITHEATRE



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Corporate Plan Output: Parks Plans and Policy Statements	

The purpose of this report is to present the outcome of the investigation of the proposal for an amphitheatre in Hagley Park, suggested by Magenta and Anthony Lealand.

BACKGROUND

In October 1999 Magenta and Anthony Lealand presented their idea of creating an amphitheatre in the events area of Hagley Park. The amphitheatre proposed was seen as a way of enhancing sightlines for audiences, the “feel-good crowd factor” and management of the crowd at events. This was to be achieved through the creation of a grass mound enclosing the area but still catering to around 100,000 people. A permanent stage was to be positioned at the southern end of the amphitheatre.

Lucas and Associates then refined the Lealand proposal to improve the overall aesthetics of the area and to facilitate access/egress by making breaks in the mounding. The stage was to be a simple grass platform and terraces rather than a permanent built structure.

The Parks Unit was asked to report back to the Committee and Ambidextrous Limited (landscape architects and engineers) were commissioned to assess the proposals as to their feasibility. Other variations on the Lealand/Lucas themes were to be considered as part of the feasibility study.

FEASIBILITY OF THE AMPHITHEATRE

In their assessment of the proposal Ambidextrous met with various stakeholders including the Lealands, event technicians, CCC event co-ordinators, heritage and cycle planners. Site surveys to determine everyday usage and circulation were carried out, together with the gleaning of desktop information including the Hagley Park Management Plan 1991.

They considered five options for the events area as follows:

1. Full enclosure amphitheatre – Lealand proposal
2. Partial enclosure amphitheatre – Lucas and Associates modification
3. Small mounding at corners only – Ambidextrous Ltd
4. Low terracing - Ambidextrous Ltd
5. Peripheral Enhancement - Ambidextrous Ltd.

The process and information involved in Ambidextrous Ltd's feasibility study is presented in a report called Hagley Park Special Events Feasibility Study. Committee members should have already sighted this report and will note that on Pages 7 and 8 each option was carefully assessed in terms of its merits and its constraints. Following on from this, each proposal was rated from 1-5, with 1 being good and 5 being poor. Rating categories included the factors below:

- overall aesthetics
- spectators' view lines
- ease of access/egress
- ease of mobility to periphery
- ease of mobility around periphery
- security and safety
- opportunities for varied events
- maintenance (mowing, drainage etc)

The feasibility study has concluded that although the creation of a permanent amphitheatre in the special events area initially appears attractive and visionary, "significant investment in a large scale full or semi-enclosed amphitheatre, for large public entertainment events, is currently not feasible". Large-scale mounding as suggested by the Lealand and Lucas proposals were found to be potentially detrimental to the aesthetics, versatility, circulation and safety of the area.

However, alternative improvements have been suggested by Ambidextrous Ltd to facilitate the continued success of the events area. Key improvements to the peripheral area can be achieved by immediately implementing the recommendations in the Hagley Park Management Plan 1991, in particular, those relating to circulation, facilities and activities. More specifically this would involve:

- Increasing the range of low-cost or free family entertainment activities, concentrating them around the southern and western sides of the small entertainment triangle near Lake Victoria.
- Improving the amenity and circulation of the Armagh Street bridge entrance as the main gateway to North Hagley Park and the Botanic Gardens
- Enhancing the circulation and safety of the toilet block intersection to the north-west of the special events area.
- Strengthening connections to the children's play area and pool in the Botanic Gardens, through improved paths and vehicle/pedestrian crossings.

Some low-scale mounding (of less than 1:100 gradient) could improve sightlines and drainage within the events area. Initial investigation suggests that the water table in some areas is in fact quite high and some filling around the lakes is recommended to improve drainage here.

CONCLUSION

Major modification to the events area of Hagley Park in terms of creating a formal amphitheatre area has been found to be undesirable. The recommendations suggested by Ambidextrous Ltd would greatly improve the area and are in line with the Hagley Park Management Plan 1991. Staff will investigate and develop a programme of works to implement some of these improvements.

The Committee supported the concept plan and recommendations drawn up by Ambidextrous Ltd and has requested the Parks Unit to develop the concept plan further. Any funding required for the proposed changes to the events area will be considered for inclusion in the 2001 Draft Financial Plan.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the creation of a formal amphitheatre in Hagley Park not be supported.
 2. That Anthony and Magenta Lealand be thanked for their creative ideas for the Hagley Park events area.