

2. PARK TERRACE LANDSCAPING VISION

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The purpose of this report is to seek the Council's approval for 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 there has been a 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.

RELEVANT CURRENT POLICY

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.

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." To date this work has mainly involved extensive tree surveys and is still in progress. This plan is an example of taking the work further into detailed plans.

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 regarding 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."

Any council project which requires public participation is carried out under the guidelines of the Seeking Community Views Policy. This plan takes into account some lower bank edge plantings using native species but essentially retaining the English tree and mown bank character.

DESCRIPTION OF THE KEY COMPONENTS OF THE LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR PARK TERRACE

The Parks and Waterways Unit has received a clear message from residents that they wish to see the existing character of Park Terrace upheld. The open character of the area with clear views to the river, bridges and in and out of Hagley Park are valued highly. In order to enhance the theme that already exists action is needed as willows and other woodland trees within Hagley Park are ageing or becoming diseased.

Several attributes of the landscape 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 the steepest banks which are difficult to maintain.

4. Removal of the bulky native species and *Gleditsia* near the Carlton Mill Bridge, but retaining the cabbage trees.
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.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The proposed replanting of willow species as older trees decay and die is not without risk as the two varieties of willow along Park Terrace are possibly the most susceptible types of willow to *Armillaria*. To rid the soil of the fungus is a difficult exercise and would require deep and wide excavation and replacement of the soil around each tree. While many submitters supported this proposal, as they believed preservation of the willow theme should be at any cost, others felt that this was hard to justify and so other methods of reducing the effect of the fungus should be explored first. Therefore, it is recommended that disease resistant strains be developed and that treatment of the roots with trichoderma, an organism that appears to retard the fungus, may well be worth trying first. If in the future the new plantings succumb to the fungus, replacement of the soil in selected areas could be revisited as could any new treatment methods that may have come to light in that time.

It is anticipated that the above proposal and other landscape improvements in line with the plan will be accommodated within the Parks and Waterways Unit's budget.

RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

Local landscape architect Wayne Rimmer has been engaged to prepare a landscape analysis and background information as the basis for discussion with residents and Council staff.

A thorough consultation process was carried out (see attachment). 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. Parks and Waterways Unit staff were 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 Parks and Waterways Arborists also took part and were able to address questions on the tree issues.

The material was also 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 clear support to build on the areas attributes and values through preparation of a landscape plan for consideration by the Council.

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, it is recommended that these areas could in some places be recontoured and regrassed while other selected areas could be planted in low-growing shrubs or grasses.

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 has the ecology of the river".

However, the area of native planting and *Gleditsia* near the Carlton Mill Bridge was found 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 other submitters strongly recommended that this planting be retained and not removed as proposed by the draft landscape plan.

Parks and Waterways Planners involved in this project believe that the clump of native species and *Gleditsia* is clearly out of place in terms of the landscape character of the stretch of the Avon River along Park Terrace. The planting is in conflict with views to the water, Hagley Park and the Carlton Mill Bridge and does not relate to anything else within the Park Terrace precinct.

Two suggestions to address the seemingly ad hoc clump of planting are:

1. That the *Gleditsia* and most of the bulky planting be removed and the area replanted with *Carex* and low shrub species. The cabbage trees which have long tap roots facilitating stabilisation should however be retained as in time their canopies will allow views through to the river.
2. The clump of native planting could be made less incongruous by “anchoring” it to the Carlton Mill Bridge through extending the theme of low native species north along the bank to the bridge. It could be balanced by similar planting which would replace the leaning willow which presently obscures the bridge on the other side of the river. This would be determined by further landscape detailing as part of the design specifications required for specific parts of the Park Terrace precinct.

CONCLUSION

The landscape plan (attached) 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 areas 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 and views within and beyond the precinct should be preserved for future generations to enjoy.

This report was received by the Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board at its meeting of 30 January 2002.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Council support the landscape plan and associated development and management recommendations.
 2. That Council staff explore the development of replacement disease resistant willow strains, with possible treatment with *Trichoderma*, with a view to beginning planting in three years time.
 3. That Council staff prepare detailed design specifications for parts of the Park Terrace precinct in line with Hagley Park Management Plan requirements and with the Park Terrace Vision plan.
 4. That the bedding plot displays at the foot of the flag poles at the intersection of Kilmore Street and Park Terrace remain as part of the Park Terrace landscape plan.