

2. PURCHASE OF LAND FOR ADDITION TO RESERVES – HUNTSBURY AND MT VERNON PARK

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The purpose of this report is to consider the purchase of an additional area of land situated at 151 Huntsbury Avenue for reserve and waterway protection purposes.

BACKGROUND

The Council at its meeting in October 2000 approved the acquisition of two parcels of land being the lower portions of No's 141 and 151 Huntsbury Avenue for the purposes of protecting the existing watercourse gully on the properties and to extend walking tracks in the area. The Council funded one purchase for addition to Huntsbury Domain while the Port Hills Park Trust Board funded the other purchase for addition to the adjoining Mt Vernon Park. Both of these transactions have now been completed and the respective areas acquired.

It was reported to the Council that the area had high aesthetic qualities and was described as being a little canyon. It has traditionally been used as a natural hillside playground, being close to residences on upper Huntsbury Avenue. There is already an informal walkway from Albert Terrace to Mt Vernon Park and the acquisitions formalised this use and enabled linkage to Huntsbury Domain to be established. The gully and cliff areas adjoining the acquisitions were also of some local significance containing the feature known as Albert Rock, which has been used for rock climbing for many years by recreational users.

Victory Stream has two contributing valleys. Victory Stream branch is the Western Valley stream. It originates on the northern slopes of Mt Vernon Park. It descends in a series of flat grades and waterfalls to the back of Albert Terrace. The sides of the valley are steep and apart from grazing by animals and plantations are unmodified by man and close to the original shape. The steep sides of the valley are highly erosive and planting of the slopes is desirable in order to stabilise the stream and protect the downstream development in the valley floor from dam-burst type flooding that can result from landslides. The addition of the reserves has enhanced the area protected by the Port Hills Park Trust Board and has allowed the stream to become an important feature of the Park.

ADDITIONAL LAND

Since acquiring the land from 151 Huntsbury Avenue the property has now changed hands and is in the process of being subdivided, separating out the living hills portion from the rural hills. The owner has approached the Council to determine whether it would be interested in acquiring more land for addition to the reserves previously acquired. Currently the only access to these areas for maintenance purposes is via Mt Vernon Park or by walking upstream, along the Victory Stream. The land at this point is very steep and the Council is finding it difficult to fence the boundary of the existing reserve, given the number of cliffs and bluffs in the vicinity. By securing the additional land the Council will not only enhance the existing reserve but secure a small plantation of pinus radiata trees which are important in stabilising the land from slippage. A vehicle right of way can also be secured from Huntsbury Avenue which will allow the Council and its employees drive on access to undertake maintenance of the area.

Sufficient funds are available in the Strategic Port Hills Reserves Vote to allow the purchase to be made this financial year.

AGREEMENT AND SOURCE OF FUNDS

Agreement has been reached with the owner (subject of course to Council approval) to acquire approximately 8702m² off the property for reserve purposes at the same dollar rate per square metre as was previously paid, subject to the Council contributing towards the cost of survey and meeting the legal costs incurred with the transaction and the creation of the right of way.

Recommendation: That the Council acquire the severance and right of way from 151 Huntsbury Avenue as a recreation reserve for amalgamation with the adjoining Mt Vernon Park on the terms contained in the public excluded section of this report.