

3. ST ALBANS PRESCHOOL

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The purpose of this report is to update the Council on further progress in finding an appropriate site for a replacement preschool following the meeting of 3 October 2003, and to obtain approval of the recommendations set out in the report.

BACKGROUND

The Council approved funding of \$350,000 for the building of a new facility for St Albans Educare Preschool on 28 March 2002.

The sum of \$350,000 was to include fitout and landscaping and a second recommendation was endorsed that any new facility be erected on land owned or controlled by the Council.

Since that date several Council-owned sites have been reviewed and discounted for various reasons. A summary of these sites is contained within this report. The latest Census statistics indicate a need for additional childcare facilities for children under five in the general area, including the Rutland Street area, Edgeware Road and St Albans East.

A submission was made to the 2003/04 Annual Plan asking for the scope to be widened to allow consideration of privately owned sites. This recommended amendment was subsequently approved. However no additional funding was granted.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Council-owned sites reviewed to date include the following:

Site	Reason for discounting as an option
Malvern Park	No scope for facility without encroaching on sports fields. Reserve issues.
English Park	Not part of original concept and no scope now.
34 & 38 Courtenay Street	Designated for road widening. Necessitates purchase of an adjacent private site est. \$200,000.
Abberley Park	Land zoned Conservation 2. No buildings greater than 40m ² unless for custodial or management purposes.
Rutland Street Reserve	Flooding issues, substantial impact on building cost, reserve issues.
St Albans School	Limited land availability for an additional building.
10 & 12 Clearbrook Street	Location in Mairehau rather than St Albans.
EPH Housing - Forfar Street and six other EPH sites	Forfar Street necessitates the relocation of EPH units and is an option not favoured by the Housing Team Leader. Other EPH complexes have high density and comprise non relocatable units.
43 Edgeware Road (Edgeware Pool and Pumping Station)	Access, visibility and location issues.
278 Westminster Street	Location is an issue for preschool.

At the Property and Projects Committee meeting of 3 October 2003 the Committee resolved that further analysis was needed of the potential for a new facility to be provided at either English Park, Rutland Street Reserve and the Works Depot buildings at 280 Westminster Street. A summary of the review of these options is detailed below:

	Advantages	Disadvantages
English Park	Good location. Adjoins St Albans school.	Land availability. Land designated as Reserve. Adjoining Salvation Army site examined but too small.
Rutland Street Reserve	Good location.	Land is swampy. Land designated Recreation Reserve. Therefore would require change in classification (notified consent and sign off by DOC). Requires resource consent.
280 Westminster Street (Works Depot buildings)	Similar location. Existing structure can be used. Plenty of space both internally and externally. Cost effective solution.	Christian childcare facility within close proximity.

English Park is a designated reserve and limited suitable land is available to site a new building and play area. The Salvation Army owned site adjoining English Park was evaluated following discussion with them. This small site contains a house currently rented and may have been made available to be used for a joint development. However, it is too small and the park area it adjoins is part of the wetlands development.

Rutland Street Reserve is classified as recreation reserve and any proposed building would require a change in classification of the portion of land upon which the building is sited. This is a publicly notified process in accordance with the requirement of Section 24 of the Reserves Act 1977. For this reason achieving a change in classification and resource consent would be difficult. The land is also prone to being swampy owing to the high water table and poor ground conditions. This would necessitate deep piling and building up of foundations.

280 Westminster Street can be converted to a well functioning and appealing preschool facility using the existing Works Depot building structure. Preliminary concept plans have been developed and these have been well received by the Preschool Committee. An estimate of the alteration costs and landscaping has not yet been undertaken, but is likely to be a cost effective solution. The St Albans Christian Preschool operate their facility at 260-262 Westminster Street. They do not just cater to Christian children and currently have over 50% of their roll as non-Christian.

The St Albans Preschool have many of their parents travelling locally in and around St Albans but also from outside the area. Of 86 children attending the school currently, 48 live in St Albans and 38 live outside St Albans and come from as far away as Kaiapoi and West Melton. They believe the future success of their preschool can only be enhanced by a new facility. They believe that what draws parents to send their children to the preschool is the appeal of the programme, the teachers and services offered. For these reasons they do not see a modest shift in location being detrimental to their operation.

It may be necessary to test the soil for contaminants at the front of the site (the proposed play area) given the history of the site.

CONCLUSION

The most cost effective option, which also has the fewest barriers in terms of reserve status issues, is 280 Westminster Street. Concept plans have been developed and these have been well received by the Preschool Committee. This option also makes use of an under-utilised existing facility, and is not a significant shift in location for the preschool.

Recommendation: That the Works Depot Buildings at 280 Westminster Street be remodelled to create the new facility for St Albans Preschool.