

3. FORMER CARETAKER'S RESIDENCE AND GROUNDS, BROMLEY CEMETERY – 128 KEIGHLEYS ROAD

Officer responsible
Greenspace Manager

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The purpose of this report is for the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee to consider the future of the former caretaker's house and outbuildings within the Bromley Cemetery.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Bromley Cemetery is zoned Conservation 4 (Cemeteries) under the proposed City Plan, and as such is a listed historic cemetery. Under the proposed City Plan it is permanently recognised "as a peaceful and undisturbed environment for commemorating early settlement and subsequent occupation".

The former caretaker's dwelling is situated inside the Bromley Cemetery near the corner of Keighleys Road and Linwood Avenue, having direct vehicular access from Keighleys Road, (refer attached plan). The property is held as fee simple land by the Council under Certificate of Title CB415/106 described as Lot 1 DP 8825.

The dwelling had a resident caretaker living in it up until the mid 1980's after which a change in management policy saw the discontinuation of this service. Latterly, the Council has used the property for short-term rental accommodation. The present occupier is responsible for opening and shutting the cemetery gateway in close proximity to the dwelling.

The condition of the exterior the dwelling is in a reasonably sound condition but substantial external repainting is required. The dwelling is at least 70 years old, consisting of a weatherboard exterior with iron roof. The two outbuildings are in a state of disrepair and require demolition. The interior of the dwelling has been well maintained by the Council.

If the dwelling and outbuildings are demolished the additional area made available could be integrated into the cemetery to provide further burial space. A number of the city's cemeteries are close to full capacity and this proposal would provide much needed extra space. It is proposed that the area would provide a combination of full burial plots, ashes plots and children's plots. The memorial to stillborn babies is located at Bromley Cemetery and it would, therefore, seem appropriate to develop a new children's section within this additional area. This would provide an opportunity to create a design for a children's section that could accommodate the decoration and planting that many parents wish to have on their children's graves.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The former caretaker's house at the Bromley Cemetery is in a fair condition, currently occupied but requiring ongoing maintenance costs. A decision is required to determine the future of this building. If the dwelling and outbuildings were demolished it is considered that the bare site (approximately 2000m² after landscaping) could be integrated into the main cemetery to provide additional burial space which could include a children's section and ashes plots. There is an important need for burial space in the Christchurch metropolitan area and this cemetery is full, apart from space for a few second interments. Extra space would therefore be desirable. Making available the building for community purposes would be considered an inappropriate option, given its condition, location and the difficulty of regular vehicle access from Linwood Avenue through the present entranceway.

RELEVANT POLICY

The proposal is consistent with the Council's Cemeteries Enhancement Programme for years 2000 to 2005 for Bromley Cemetery, which states:

"Consider development of area occupied by sexton's house for additional full plots and ashes interment area."

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no legal impediments to demolishing the dwelling and landscaping the site. The house is not a listed heritage item and therefore no resource consent for demolition or landscaping is required.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Greenspace Unit has regularly overseen the maintenance of the dwelling, which is in a sound structural state, to ensure any occupants are provided with adequate living accommodation. In the 2002-2003 financial year City Care were instructed to undertake a total structural precheck, replace deteriorated weatherboards, seal replacement components, and resecure any loose fitting window sashes and frames up to a total capped amount of \$4500. This work was subsequently carried out to a good standard of workmanship.

On the basis of replacement cost, less depreciation and obsolescence, the Christchurch City Council's current net book value of the dwelling is \$6514.38. This book value anticipates a "residual life" for the dwelling of a maximum of five (5) years. The fences are in a poor state of repair, and are at the end of their life, and therefore considered to have no value. Whilst there will be a minor loss in revenue from demolishing the dwelling there will be community benefits in providing more space for ash and full burial plots.

It is anticipated that the cost to the Council of having the dwelling demolished and the site cleared will be in the range of \$7500-\$14000, which can be accommodated within the Greenspace Unit's operating budget for 2004/2005.

CONCLUSION

It is considered that the demolition of the building and clearing of the site is warranted given the obsolescence of the dwelling on the site, the low net book value of the dwelling, the high cost of maintaining the asset, and more importantly, the large number of burial/and or ash plots that will be made available if the site is cleared and landscaped. A separate arrangement can be facilitated with a security firm for cemetery gate opening and closing. If the Parks, Gardens, and Waterways Committee decides that the dwelling should be retained and the Greenspace Manager authorises the implementation of a landscape plan for the site, this will require a separate building to secure past burial register records of a historical significance that may be viewed by members of the public, with viewing hours during the hours in which the cemetery is normally open.

COMMUNITY BOARD CONSIDERATION

This proposal was considered by the Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board at its meeting on 7 July 2004. The Board **decided** to recommend to the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee:

1. That the house be retained and upgraded on the site.
2. That the Council negotiate with City Care for an appropriately skilled person to be appointed to maintain the cemetery and adjacent cemeteries.
3. That staff be requested to investigate the possibility of erecting a building at the cemetery for storing the cemetery register (enabling the register to be freely available for public viewing).

Staff

- Recommendation:**
1. That the house and associated structures be removed from the site and the area cleared.
 2. That the cleared area be dedicated to cemetery space to be landscaped, as approved by the Greenspace Manager.

Chairman's

- Recommendation:** For discussion.