

## 6. ABBERLEY PARK – ENHANCEMENT AND MAINTENANCE PLAN

<b>General Manager responsible:</b>	General Manager Jane Parfitt
<b>Officer responsible:</b>	Greenspace Manager
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### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to obtain the Board's approval to the enhancement and maintenance plan proposed for Abberley Park, following community consultation (refer attached). The plan suggests establishing a formal rose garden at the north end of the park, replacing fencing with some maintenance to plant collections and trees. A footbridge is under renewal for safety reasons.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. A report was presented to the Shirley/Papanui Community Board and the former Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee in February 2004 to consider the future of the former caretaker's house and outbuildings at the north end of Abberley Park. The recommendations were:

*"1. That the house and associated structures be removed from the site returning the area to park with appropriate landscaping treatments.*

*2. That the landscaping plan for the site be updated in consultation with the local community".*

The above recommendations were subsequently adopted by Council at its meeting of 26 February 2004.

3. The Greenspace Unit capital budget has funding allocated in the current financial year for landscaping enhancement and essential park maintenance within Abberley Park. A concept plan was prepared incorporating enhancement suggestions and essential park maintenance.
4. The plan suggested:
  - Establishing a formal style rose garden at the north end of the park. The garden would feature a collection of roses similar to those used in the original homestead rose gardens (early 20<sup>th</sup> century). The design also proposed an astrolabe sculpture to feature centrally in the garden layout.
  - Replacing the deteriorating fence along the Abberley Crescent frontage and the temporary fence along Kinleys Lane with 'heritage-style' bollard and chain.
5. The footbridge crossing St Albans Stream requires renewal because of its age and poor condition. The bridge will be replaced with a replica, and lowered slightly to comply with health and safety obligations. Bridge approaches will be graded to fit with the new bridge level and nearby shrubbery pruned back as per a previous Board suggestion.
6. All of the trees in the Park have been surveyed as part of a safety assessment. Some have been identified as requiring remedial pruning and others will be removed and replaced as necessary over a 10 year timeframe.
7. Further maintenance will occur on Abberley Park's plant collections. The scented garden, originally a partnership with the Royal New Zealand Foundation for the Blind, is in need of renovation and renewal. Collections such as Philadelphus (Mock Orange), Syringa (Lilac), Rhododendron and Ferns are all in need of renewal and/or bulking up.

8. A draft concept plan was distributed to approximately 350 households near to Abberley Park, with consultation also carried out with local community interest groups and residents' associations. Project information was posted on the Council website, local newsletters, notice-boards and community newspapers. Midway through consultation those interested in the project were invited to attend a 'garden tour' information session with Council staff.
9. 114 submissions were received with the majority supporting most aspects of the proposal.

#### **FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

10. The proposed development work for Abberley Park is programmed in the Greenspace Unit's capital budget for construction over the 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 financial years. Tree maintenance and replacement and plant collections maintenance will be funded separately from the Greenspace Unit's operational budget.
11. Abberley Park has a Christchurch City Plan listing of group three; protected buildings, places and objects. In addition, under the City Plan General City Rules, Section 9: 1.2, a conservation plan may be required for future management and development of Abberley Park.
12. A number of the trees within Abberley Park are protected under the City Plan. Therefore removal and some maintenance required may require resource consent. No issues are anticipated in obtaining these consents.

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Board approve the proposed landscape plan for Abberley Park.

#### **CHAIRPERSON'S RECOMMENDATION**

That the officer's recommendation be adopted.

## BACKGROUND ON ABBERLEY PARK ENHANCEMENT AND MAINTENANCE PLAN

13. Abberley Park is one of Christchurch's nine garden parks noted for its collection of mature trees, attractive stream and well-planned scented garden. Abberley has its origins as a private garden, with the earliest trees dating from the 1860s. The park retains much of its original peaceful 19th century character, since maintenance rather than redevelopment has been the focus from the time it came under City Council ownership in the late 1930s.
14. The design intention for enhancement was a proposal in keeping with the historical nature and style of Abberley Park. The original homestead had a large rose garden that was added to by Council after purchase. However, this was removed from a central location in the park as part of the scented garden development. The north lawn is an optimal position for a rose garden, not impinging on any of the larger picnicking areas and with occasional light shade from the surrounding trees. The changes suggested will provide new interest while not diminishing the character of the heritage garden park.
15. Ongoing maintenance requirements for the ageing park trees, coupled with renewal needed for the plant collections were added to the project in order to complete an overall enhancement for Abberley Park.
16. A draft concept plan was distributed in April 2006 throughout the local community, to interest groups and organisations for public comment. An information session (garden tour) was held at Abberley Park on Saturday 29 April 2006. Despite inclement weather, approximately forty people attended for a positive, constructive discussion on the proposal.
17. There was very strong support for the initiatives suggested in the plan. Many respondents took the time to endorse improvements to the design details – a summary of the recurring feedback is outlined below:
  - There was concern that replacing the current wire-mesh fence with bollard and chain may not stop children, dogs, balls etc from running onto Abberley Crescent.
  - Many submissions commented on the lighting throughout the park. There was strong support to light the pathway used to shortcut from Ranfurly Street to Abberley Crescent. Some suggested that increasing the lighting around the toilet area would deter vandalism.
  - Feedback on seating arrangements suggested that more may be required.
  - Comments regarding the tree management were favourable. Many submitters sought assurance that the character of the park would not be changed by this essential maintenance work.
  - There was some comment on the woodland, tranquil nature of the park and the dominant effect of adjacent housing.
  - Speeding traffic was seen as an issue in many streets surrounding the park.
  - Ten submissions were received from a group specifically advocating for the replanting of Abberley Park with indigenous tree/shrub species.
18. In light of the feedback received regarding the safety of the bollard and chain fence, a planting buffer zone is proposed for sections alongside this fencing. This buffer zone will provide both a physical and visual barrier to prevent egress onto Abberley Crescent, while being low enough to retain clear sight-lines into the park.

19. Funding has been found to replace the light pole at the north end of the park with one more in keeping with the heritage nature of the park. The wiring to the light from Abberley Crescent can be put underground as part of the earthworks for the rose garden. Lighting throughout the rest of the park cannot be assessed or acted upon as part of this project. A comprehensive evaluation of safety and future aspirations for Abberley Park must be completed and the results weighed against other area priorities. This issue has been raised with the Shirley/Papanui Parks and Waterways Advocate to fit with future project planning.
20. Although the condition survey of the trees within Abberley Park has now been completed, the results have not been collated and placed within a timeline for management. As discussed at the information meeting, local residents will be informed of the tree management via plans placed on the park notice board. In addition, information will be circulated separately for Shirley/Papanui Community Board members' information. Wherever possible, removed trees will be replaced to maintain the woodland nature of the park.
21. Feedback on mitigating the effect of nearby buildings will be worked through with property owners. There is some scope to use planting and fencing to achieve palatable screening compromises for both property owners and users of the park.
22. While consultation on Abberley Park has focused on the new development of the old caretaker's residence there will be ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the existing plantings. The under-story in Abberley Park has deteriorated over time and, in recognition of this, (as budget allows) plantings will be rejuvenated and increased to build a healthy ecosystem. This philosophy includes the maintenance of the native under-story as a recycling system.
23. Clarifying the overall intention with Abberley Park, the aim is to maintain and enhance a central corridor of native plantings along the St Albans Stream. This corridor will be managed to allow for stream access and visibility. The plantings moving out from the central corridor will be exotic, focusing on scented plants to maintain both the heritage of the park and the link the park has had with the Foundation for the Blind. This will also incorporate and build upon the existing fauna attracting plants (i.e. Ilex on the lawn and in the southern border). Renewal planting will include species that provide an important source of food for birds in the off season of indigenous native plants. This balance will also provide for other fauna such as the Monarch butterfly.

#### **OPTIONS**

24. The development options are as follows:
  - a) Status quo – no work completed in Abberley Park. Essential maintenance work on trees and the footbridge is required therefore this option does not satisfy health and safety obligations.
  - b) Essential maintenance only. This satisfies health and safety obligations. However, this option does not address the landscaping recommended as part of a former Board and Council resolution.
  - c) Essential maintenance and enhancement (rose garden, replacement fencing). This option fulfils health and safety requirements, Council recommendations, and is most favoured by the community.

#### **PREFERRED OPTION**

25. The preferred option is c), which is consistent with feedback received through community consultation.