

13. BARNETT PARK PLAYGROUND UPGRADE

General Manager responsible:	General Manager City Environment, DDI 941-8656
Officer responsible:	Manager Transport and Greenspace
Author:	Joanne Walton, Parks and Waterways Area Advocate

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Board approval to the plan for the upgrade of the playground at Barnett Park following consultation with the local community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Board members will recall that options for the upgrade of the playground at Barnett Park were presented to the Board on 25 October 2006 prior to the Transport and Greenspace Unit carrying out consultation with the local community.
3. The public information leaflet was distributed to approximately 600 households in the Redcliffs-Moncks Bay area, along with a number of identified key stakeholder groups. There was a very good response from the local community with a total of 123 residents returning the comment form providing feedback on the proposed options. Many respondents indicated that they had consulted with their children and grandchildren when doing so. Overall we received a very positive response from the community with the feedback indicating a high level of support for the proposed upgrade of the playground.

Support for proposal	Number of responses	%
Option One	86	67.7
Option Two	35	27.5
Either/No preference	3	2.4
Multiple responses	2	
Not stated	3	2.4
Total number of responses	127	100%
Total number of response forms	123	

(Note: The total number of responses does not equal the total number of response forms as two response forms indicated multiple replies, that is, different members of the household supporting different options.)

4. A very clear majority of 86 (67.7%) respondents were in favour of Option One which includes:
 - Provision of a new Nexus 'Velocity' climbing frame, 'Flexus' balance activity and rotating 'Spica' for school aged children.
 - Provision of a new 'Racer' spring toy and a 'Fantail' spinning carousel for younger children.
 - Retention of the existing swings, see-saws and slide, with the slide repainted and the see-saws repositioned.
 - Removal of the rocking horse and fort structures.
5. In recognition of this feedback, the Transport and Greenspace Unit proposes that Option One be approved and implemented (refer **attached** plan).
6. Two minor changes have been made to the original plan as follows:
 - (a) The area to be occupied by the planned crèche is shown. This development will not conflict with the layout of the upgraded playground.
 - (b) The existing pedestrian access point on Main Road has been shown on the plan for further investigation.
7. Within each of the options presented, the combination of play equipment was chosen to provide a variety of play experiences for different aged children within the available budget. However 19 of those respondents who indicated their preference for Option One considered that this option provided a wider range of new equipment that would be more entertaining and challenging for children of different ages.

8. A need for the playground at Barnett Park to be different from others playgrounds was also identified, with three respondents also noting that the octagonal play-net in Option Two was duplicating that already present in another nearby park. The need for diversity was a common issue in the findings of the *Hagley Ferrymead Community Board Leisure, Parks and Waterway Study (2003)*.
9. Although five respondents did believe that the play-net in Option Two provided activities for children of different ages, eight others expressed various concerns about its use. These included the play-net being physically dangerous for younger children, its use being dominated by older children, and it being prone to vandalism.
10. The safety of the existing slide for younger children was an issue for 5 respondents. Transport and Greenspace Unit staff have noted that it can still be used by younger children, or parents have the option of lifting them onto lower part of slide and supervising accordingly.
11. Concern has been expressed about the proposed removal of the rocking horse by 11 respondents as this has been a very popular item of play equipment over many years. However, it is showing considerable wear due its age, and now has a limited life. Unfortunately it would not be economic to repair and retain it, nor is replacement possible as these horses are no longer being manufactured. This type of rocking horse also may present a safety hazard when in use. Five children of different ages and sizes can be on the horse at any one time, often with an older child at the front and in control of its movement. Younger children may get out of rhythm with the motion of the horse, and the other children, and hit their face on the back of the head of the child in front. They may also be unable to hold on and are catapulted off. A younger child in particular has no control over the motion of the horse and cannot get off. A similar problem exists with the older style roundabouts. The proposed "Racer" has a similar rocking motion, and is more suited to a younger age group.
12. Similarly, concerns about the proposed removal of the old adventure fort and pipes on the western slope of the park have been expressed by eight respondents as these have provided opportunities for adventure play for many years. This equipment has also reached the end of its useful life. The fort structure would not now meet playground safety standards, and its timbers are beginning to split and rot. Similarly, the various timber poles are rotting. The concrete on the ends of the pipes is beginning to break off which will eventually expose the ends of the steel reinforcing rods within. The principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) are incorporated in to the design of Council amenities including parks and playgrounds in accordance with Council policy. The location of these play structures where they are partially screened by overhanging trees and other vegetation would not comply with a CPTED audit. The playground equipment needs to be located in one area where it is clearly visible and children are easily seen and supervised. However children are not being prevented from playing and using the tracks within the natural areas of Barnett Park.
13. Several respondents expressed a desire for additional play equipment or recreational facilities to be provided. At this time, there is no funding available for other pieces of equipment in addition to those shown on the concept plans, and similarly, for other facilities such as a BMX track or volleyball court. The park currently provides plenty of open grassed space for visitors to play informal games such as volleyball, and there are a number of large trees around the playground that provide shade. A formal volleyball or other court would be a significant encroachment upon the grassed open space available.
14. A range of issues with the proposed grit pathways in the playground were raised by two respondents. These included questioning the need for a path; the difficulty of walking barefoot or pushing buggies over this surface material; the potential for children to throw the grit around; and difficulties in mowing the area. Under Council's *Parks and Waterways Access Policy (2002)*, playgrounds are required to be serviced by an access route. All paths are required to be constructed with materials that are both firm and stable, and slip and skid resistant firm. Soft surfaces such as grass and sand can be difficult to negotiate for children, and their parents or caregivers, with limited mobility, balance or vision, and for prams and wheelchairs. The high cost of some surfacing that allows easy access is acknowledged in the policy with provision for the use of other surfaces as per the playground safety standards. The material proposed for the paths is crusher dust which is a fine material with a particle size of less than 5mm that compacts down to a firm surface. It complies with accessibility standards, cannot be easily thrown about, and is kinder to bare feet. The current budget cannot support sealing of the paths with asphalt hot mix. This is also unpleasant for bare feet in hot weather.

15. The safety of pedestrian access to the playground and the park was also considered. The proposed installation of the low post and cable fence along the boundary with the driveway and car-park was supported by three respondents. There were no comments in opposition. The frequent parking of vehicles on the grass and playground area, particularly when the sports-fields are in use, has created a safety hazard for children using the playground. One respondent also identified the need for safe pedestrian access to the park that is clearly differentiated from the vehicle access. A current constraint to providing easy pedestrian access to the playground from Main Road is the raised bund along most of this front boundary. This bund plays an essential role in the management of land surface water drainage of the neighbourhood. The height of this bund is crucial to its effective functioning therefore any pedestrian access point cannot lower its height. However the entrance must still be of the right gradient and design for accessibility. Staff will continue to investigate options for improving pedestrian access, including the possibility for further development of an existing informal access point from Main Road in the south-east corner of the park, and the extension of the path from the playground area to this point.
16. A number of issues were raised by submitters that were considered to be outside the scope of this particular project, including rubbish, the upgrade of the public toilets, walking tracks, and land drainage. The provision of rubbish bins is consistent with current practice for a park of this size. It is also considered to be a more environmentally sustainable practice to encourage people to take responsibility for their own rubbish by taking it away for recycling rather than leaving it behind in the park. The public toilets at the road entrance to the park are being monitored for usage during this calendar year to determine if either upgrading or removal is justified. There are additional toilets available to the public in the sports-club building adjacent to the car-park. Other issues have been referred to other staff within Council as appropriate.
17. All respondents who supplied their contact details have been sent a letter of reply thanking them for their input. The letter also informed respondents that the final plan would be presented to the Board for approval. Details of the meeting were provided so that any interested people could attend.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

18. The current Greenspace Capital Works Programme has funding available to undertake the playground upgrade at Barnett Park with \$80,000 available in the current 2006/07 year. Subject to any unavoidable delays, the works will be completed within the current financial year.
19. The upgrade of the playground will comply with the New Zealand Standard NZS 5828:2004 *Playground equipment and surfacing* in accordance with Council policy.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Board approve option (B): that the plan (Option One) for the upgrade of the playground at Barnett Park be approved, and the Transport and Greenspace Unit commence the construction programme.

CHAIRPERSON'S RECOMMENDATION

That the staff recommendation be adopted.

OPTIONS

20. There are two options:
 - (a) Do nothing/maintain the status quo.

This is not considered a viable option as the current playground has a limited range of equipment and is outdated.
 - (b) Approve the plan (Option One) for the upgrade of the playground at Barnett Park, and the Transport and Greenspace Unit commence the construction programme. This will allow the Transport and Greenspace Unit to provide an improved playground with an improved design that provides better facilities and play opportunities for children using the reserve and their caregivers.

PREFERRED OPTION

21. The preferred option is (b).

ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS

The Preferred Option

22. Approve the plan (Option One) for the upgrade of the playground at Barnett Park, and the Transport and Greenspace Unit commence the construction programme.

	Benefits (current and future)	Costs (current and future)
Social	Improved play opportunities for both children in this immediate area, and those visiting the park from other area, improved facilities for caregivers, improved safety for users with play equipment and traffic, improved access.	None identified.
Cultural	No cultural benefits identified.	None identified.
Environmental	Enhancement of recreational facilities and landscape values.	None identified.
Economic	No positive economic impact for the community identified.	\$80,000 already in capital programme for 2006/07 year. May be increased maintenance costs for additional equipment.
Extent to which community outcomes are achieved: Primary alignment with community outcomes: A City for Recreation, Fun and Creativity. A Healthy City. Also aligns with: A City with a Sustainable Natural Environment - Our City's natural resources, biodiversity, landscapes and ecosystem integrity are protected and enhanced.		
Impact on Council's capacity and responsibilities: No impacts on Council's capacity and responsibilities have been identified.		
Effects on Maori: This is an upgrade of an existing facility. No effects on Maori have been identified by staff. Maori were given the opportunity to provide feedback during the consultation with the local community and through local runanga as identified key stakeholders.		
Consistency with existing Council policies: Parks and Waterways Access Policy. Children's Play Equipment on Parks Policy. Safer Christchurch Strategy. Children's Policy. Physical Recreation and Sport Strategy.		
Views and preferences of persons affected or likely to have an interest: A good response was received from the local community and user groups, with a high level of support for the proposed upgrade of the playground, and a clear majority in favour of Option One. A number of persons expressed concerns about the proposed removal of the rocking horse and fort.		
Other relevant matters: None identified.		

Maintain The Status Quo (If Not Preferred Option)

23. Do nothing/maintain the status quo.

	Benefits (current and future)	Costs (current and future)
Social	None identified.	Recreation experience for children visiting this park is not enhanced by existing outdated facilities.
Cultural	None identified.	None identified.
Environmental	None identified.	None identified.
Economic	No immediate financial cost of upgrade.	Eventual removal of old equipment.
Extent to which community outcomes are achieved: None identified.		
Impact on Council's capacity and responsibilities: No impacts on Council's capacity and responsibilities have been identified.		
Effects on Maori: As this would involve no change to an existing facility, no effects on Maori have been identified by staff. Maori were given the opportunity to provide feedback during the consultation with the local community and through local runanga as identified key stakeholders.		
Consistency with existing Council policies: N/A.		
Views and preferences of persons affected or likely to have an interest: Those residents who did respond indicated a high level of support for the proposed upgrade.		
Other relevant matters: None identified.		