

## 7. ST ALBANS CREEK ENHANCEMENT (76 WESTMINSTER TO COURTENAY STREET SECTION)

<b>General Manager responsible:</b>	General Manager, City Environment Group
<b>Officer responsible:</b>	Manager, Transport and Greenspace
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### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Board's approval to proceed to detailed design and construction of the St Albans Creek enhancement (76 Westminster to Courtenay Street section).

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. This stream enhancement project relates to a small section of St Albans Creek between Courtenay Street and the rear entrance to St Albans School. This part of St Albans Creek needs to be enhanced. The area includes some old concrete bridges, a garage, a number of mature trees and a grassed area adjacent to Courtenay Street.
3. This corner site is owned by the Council and has previously been considered for use as part of a proposal to widen Courtenay Street, which did not proceed. Funding has been allocated in the Capital Programme for the 2008/09 and 2009/10 financial years to investigate the widening of Courtenay Street.
4. In November 2006 a publicity pamphlet was distributed to the local community and stakeholders (refer attachment 1). There was a high degree of community engagement in this project. The consultation received a 21% response rate, which was largely very supportive of the proposal, although concerns were raised about a number of local roading issues. The consultation outcome and project team responses are summarised in attachment 2.
5. The main requests made by submitters were for:
  - Seating
  - Amendments to the alignment of the proposed pathway
  - Amendments to the proposed planting and tree removals
  - Roading and storm water upgrades.
6. The initial concept has been amended in response to community feedback and the preferred option is included as attachment 3. This option best satisfies the objectives of the project, has good community support and is consistent with the funding allocated in the Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP). The construction and removal of the trees and structures is scheduled for March 2007 and the plantings are scheduled for the winter planting season in May to July 2007.

### FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

7. The funding for the proposed upgrade to St Albans Creek is has been set aside in the LTCCP under "Parks, Open Spaces and Waterways – Local Projects – Waterways and Wetlands Restoration" (refer page 84 LTCCP).
8. The funds are programmed in the Capital Programme Unit's budget, for construction over the 2006/2007 financial year - specifically, \$50,000 for 76 Westminster (Waterways & Wetlands Restoration).

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Shirley/Papanui Community Board approves the plan in attachment 3 in order to proceed to detailed design and construction/ implementation of the concept for St Albans Creek (76 Westminster to Courtenay Street section).

### CHAIRPERSON'S RECOMMENDATION

That the staff recommendation be adopted.

## BACKGROUND ON THE ST ALBANS CREEK ENHANCEMENT

9. This stream enhancement project relates to a small section of St Albans Creek between Courtenay Street and the rear entrance to St Albans School. The area includes some old concrete bridges a garage, a number of mature trees and a grassed area adjacent to Courtenay Street.
10. This corner site is owned by the Council and has previously been considered for use as part of a proposal to widen Courtenay Street, which did not proceed. Funding has been allocated in the Capital Programme for the 2008/09 and 2009/10 financial years to investigate the widening of Courtenay Street.
11. While the roading issues are being investigated, it is considered that the land could be used as a thoroughfare between Courtenay Street and the Westminster Street, improving access to St Albans School and providing a recreational opportunity for the local residents.
12. The objectives for the project were to:
  - Maintain functionality and capacity of St Albans Creek
  - Stabilise and enhance the stream bank without compromising the stability of adjacent structures and footpath
  - Safety around the school entranceway and the creek environs is improved
  - Undertake tree assessment.
13. The Project Team developed a concept to meet these objectives, which included the following:
  - Stream bank enhancement with basalt rock bank protection and landscaping of the stream bank with native wetland ground cover planting
  - Perimeter landscaping of the site with low ground cover planting
  - A pathway linkage between Courtenay Street and the Westminster Street (near the entrance to St Albans School)
  - Removal of high iron fence adjacent to Westminster St and replacement with see through fencing
  - Removal of garage and concrete bridges and fence between 38 Courtenay Street and Westminster Street
  - Removal of one Maytenus tree, two Ash trees, a Laurel tree, and a Birch tree.
14. In November 2006 a publicity pamphlet was distributed to approximately 150 residences and key stakeholders. This pamphlet included a summary of the concept and an initial concept plan (refer attachment 1), and a feedback form. The project team sought feedback from the community to see whether the proposal was generally supported and sought comment about the proposal.
15. The consultation received a 21% response rate (31 responses). Community feedback was generally very positive although concerns were raised about a number of local roading issues. The consultation outcome and project team responses are summarised in attachment 2. Two submitters opposed the proposal as they sought upgrades to Courtenay Street and its intersection with Westminster Street. One submitter supported on the proviso that the trees indicated for removal were retained. The remaining submitters, including St Albans School, supported the proposal.
16. The main requests made by submitters were for:
  - Seating
  - Amendments to the alignment of the proposed pathway
  - Amendments to the proposed planting and tree removals.
17. The community also sought upgrades to areas outside the scope of this project, such as roading and storm water. Information was sought about earlier proposals to widen Courtenay Street and Council progress on these matters.

18. The project team considered the feedback from consultation and revised the concept plan to include the following:
  - A seat
  - Realignment of the proposed footpath (to provide more open space)
  - Increased the height of the proposed border plantings to approximately 1-1.5m high (to more clearly delineated the public/private boundary)
  - Planting of two kowhai trees
  - The removal of the gum tree closest to the street.
19. Discussion with the community revealed that this piece of land is well used by local people. Prior to the construction of fencing across this site it was used as a shortcut between Courtenay Street and Westminster Street. The reinstatement of this thoroughfare is welcomed by the community. While this space is not a formal reserve, it is well used by the community as a place to rest and recreate. A seat has been included in the proposal to cater for this need.
20. It was identified that the amount of grassed open space should be maximised and not be cut off by the proposed path. The project team has realigned the path to cater for this as much as possible but did not feel it appropriate to realign the path towards 34 Courtenay Street because the 'desire line' for pedestrians is likely to be in a more central location. The selected alignment moves the path closer to the river, for visual appeal, and aligns it with an existing crossing point on Courtenay St while keeping pedestrians a safe distance from the existing driveway on the western boundary of the site.
21. The assessment by the Arborist recommended the removal of five trees from the site. The maytenus is a noxious tree species located on the property boundary. The two ash trees and the laurel tree are in poor condition, partly due to the fact that they have been previously cut down and since suckered. The birch tree is in decline and is located below power lines.
22. There was a request to retain the ash and laurel trees. However, as these are in poor condition and their retention would preclude the proposed thoroughfare, it is recommended that these are removed. This area has a number of mature trees and it is proposed to add two kowhai trees, which are iconic to St Albans. The public consultation highlighted the need for the removal of a gum tree that inhibits visibility and is located below power lines.
23. The issues regarding road upgrades will be forwarded to the relevant staff for consideration and those submitters that attended a site meeting have been advised to contact the Capital Programme (Transport) Team Leader to seek information on any upcoming roading projects in the area. This project team has since been advised that funding has been allocated in the Capital Programme for the 2008/09 and 2009/10 financial years to investigate the widening of Courtenay Street. The community will be advised of this prior to a decision being made on this stream enhancement project.
24. The recommended concept plan is included as attachment 3. The construction and removal of the trees and structures is scheduled for March 2007 and the plantings are scheduled for the winter planting season in May-July 2007.

## **OPTIONS**

25. Two options were considered for the St Albans Creek enhancement:
  - (a) Enhancement of St Albans Creek and surrounds. This option is most favoured by the community, which supports the development of this area. The pathway proposal will improve access for all in this area. Social and environmental benefits will accrue from stream enhancement, seating, landscaping and removal of fencing.
  - (b) Status quo - No work completed on St Albans Creek. This option would not meet community expectations, would not enhance St Albans Creek, would not improve pedestrian access in this area and would not improve the access to St Albans School.

## PREFERRED OPTION

26. The preferred option, (a) the enhancement of St Albans Creek and surrounds, best satisfies the objectives of the project and is consistent with feedback received through community consultation.
27. This option is consistent with the:
- LTCCP 2006-2016
  - Parks and Open Spaces Activity Management Plan
  - Parks and Waterways Access Policy.
28. This option has primary alignment with the following Community Outcomes:
- *“We value leisure time and recognise that the arts, sports, and other recreational activities contribute to our economy, identity, health and well being.”; and*
  - *“Christchurch has a vibrant centre, attractive neighbourhoods and well-designed transport networks. Our lifestyles and heritage are enhanced by our urban environment.”*