

11. CHRISTCHURCH BOTANIC GARDENS CENTRE

General Manager responsible:	General Manager Capital Programme, DDI 941-8235
Officer responsible:	Transport & Greenspace Manager
Author:	Matt Cummins

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Council of progress to date on the Botanic Gardens Centre project, advise on scope and budget, and to seek approval to proceed with the proposed design competition.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Following a recommendation from the Hearings Subcommittee, the Council adopted "Concept 1" in Appendix 4 of the Draft Hagley Park/Botanic Gardens Master Plan as a preferred site for the location of a new combined visitor centre/staff facility. (This is the location of the existing nursery and staff quarters, situated across the river from the main car park, off Rolleston Avenue.) Specifically, "a new, re-developed visitor/information and operational facility, (supported to be a building complex that can achieve a six green star NZ certified rating, to be designed by competition, and referred to, initially at least, as the Botanic Gardens Centre").
3. The Hearings Subcommittee also recommended a combined pedestrian and vehicle access bridge from the Armagh Street driveway in North Hagley Park across the Avon River to the recommended site for the proposed facilities to be built in the Botanic Gardens. The bridge will reduce the necessity for service vehicles to drive through the Botanic Gardens.
4. Over the past six months Council staff have been working on the planning aspects of this project and a core team has been formed to look at some of the issues in more detail.
5. The project team wishes to proceed in 2008 with the appointment of an assessment panel and an invited design competition to select an architect/lead consultant.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6. Current project budget in the 2006-16 LTCCP is \$10m:

2007/08 - \$189,000
2008/09 - \$2,850,000
2009/10 - \$7,000,000

Do the Recommendations of this Report Align with 2006-16 LTCCP budgets?

7. The former City Solutions Unit drafted a project brief in 2003. The functional requirements in this brief were reviewed and costed by an independent quantity surveyor in December 2007.
 - (a) Construction cost (including demolition, landscaping and fit-out) - \$9.6m
 - (b) Professional fees and consents – \$1.7m

The above figures do not include inflation or project contingency.

8. Included in the Hearing Subcommittee's recommendation is a new access bridge across the river and into the site. It is proposed that the bridge, identified in the Hagley Park/Botanic Gardens Master Plan, is included in this project as a "service-vehicle"-only bridge with the existing pedestrian bridge remaining as the main entrance point for visitors. It should be noted that there is currently no funding in the LTCCP for the bridge. Anticipated cost is approximately \$1m and funding will be a Council decision through the LTCCP process.
9. In order to minimise disruption to the rest of the Gardens and to avoid heavy vehicle traffic travelling through from Rolleston Avenue, it is proposed that a temporary bridge is erected across the river and into the site during the construction period. This will eventually be replaced with a more permanent structure if the Council resolves that this should happen.

10. Point no. 14 in the Report of the Hagley Park/Botanic Gardens Subcommittee (August 2007) states that “the additional cost for an environmentally green building has not been estimated”. Professional advice sought on this matter suggests an additional cost of 10% to 15% of the total budget. The objective to achieve “six green star” environmental accreditation should be reviewed in terms of the additional expenditure versus value added. It is understood that no “six green star” building exists in New Zealand and that there is currently no tool available to assess compliance of a public building. The “six green star” accreditation is extremely difficult to achieve and is largely a good marketing opportunity. It also relies heavily on stringent compliance and ticking the right boxes. Consideration should be given to the fact that an environmentally sustainable, green building does not have to be a “Six Green Star Building”.
11. The total budget will be specifically stated in the design competition brief and the successful consultant will be asked to produce a design to meet this requirement.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

12. None

Have you considered the legal implications of the issue under consideration?

13. N/A

ALIGNMENT WITH LTCCP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS

14. The replacement of the Botanic Gardens visitor centre and an upgrade of staff facilities is a major capital project in the Long-Term Council Community Plan 2006-2016.

Do the recommendations of this report support a level of service or project in the 2006-16 LTCCP?

15. Yes

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIES

16. Hagley Park and Botanic Gardens Master Plan 2006

Do the recommendations align with the Council’s strategies?

17. Yes

CONSULTATION FULFILMENT

18. Consultation was undertaken on the Hagley Park and Botanic Gardens Master Plan. At this stage, no further consultation is planned for the Botanic Gardens Centre.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council:

- (a) Appoint an assessment panel consisting of (suggested) a Chairperson, the Transport and Greenspace Manager, Botanic Gardens Operations Manager, Botanic Gardens Curator, an architect, a landscape architect and a nominated elected member. The panel will be supported by relevant Council staff.
- (b) Instruct staff, in consultation with the panel, to proceed with registrations of interest.
- (c) Request the panel to shortlist consultants to participate in the design competition.
- (d) Invite those successful to provide a design for a green building to the highest possible standard within budget.
- (e) Request the panel to recommend to the Council the preferred design concept.

BACKGROUND

19. It is proposed that a consultant be engaged (through a competition process) to provide a full architectural and engineering service. The selection process will occur in two stages. Stage 1 will invite all consultants to register expressions of interest in the project. These expressions will be evaluated by an appointed assessment panel, comprising of both Council staff and external advisers. In Stage 2, the successful consultants will be invited to participate in an invited design competition, with a pre-determined fee paid to each consultant.
20. An external architect (Professor John Hunt, University of Auckland) has been engaged as a competition adviser based on his extensive experience of design competitions. It is proposed that Professor Hunt be asked to chair the assessment panel. A probity specialist (Pricewaterhouse Coopers) has also been engaged to ensure that the Council follows a thorough, fair and transparent process throughout the competition.
21. REBRI methodologies (Resource Efficiency in the Building and Related Industries) will be applied during demolition and construction. The new building will incorporate sustainable strategies and technologies, where possible, and will be an iconic 'green' building for the city of Christchurch.
22. The project to construct a new bridge is inextricably linked to the Botanic Gardens Centre but currently has no funding in the LTCCP. It is proposed initially, that a temporary bridge will be constructed across the Avon River to allow vehicles and machinery to access the site and to reduce the impact to the Gardens from heavy vehicles accessing from Rolleston Avenue.
23. It is proposed that the current visitor centre be demolished (along with the nursery) and the adjacent area landscaped to direct pedestrians towards the new facility. Investigations into relocating the existing visitor centre concluded that it would need to be split into several sections to manoeuvre it through the Gardens which would prove very costly. There may be opportunities to find a new use for the existing building. However, it is located directly in front of the project site and so the assumption for now is that it will be demolished.
24. Options for the existing café are currently being explored and advice being taken from the Council's property consultants. It is assumed, however, that this building will remain as a drinks/ice cream outlet but that the main leaseholder will be based in the café within the new Centre. A newly constructed café/kitchen will be reasonable in size and will be cater towards sandwiches and coffees rather than a large scale restaurant catering for outside functions.
25. Achieving Green Star accreditation is attainable but adds considerable cost to the project, (in the region of 10% to 15%). A good example of a five star accredited project is the Meridian Building in Wellington (www.meridianbuliding.co.nz). There may be an opportunity for the Christchurch City Council, in partnership with other councils, to fund and develop a tool for assessing Green Star compliance of public buildings.
26. New staff facilities are included within the scope of this project. It is acknowledged that the current staff facilities are inadequate. Storage is one of the biggest concerns for Gardens staff and whilst there is extensive space needed for the storage of plants, there are also collections of books, archives, records and a herbarium that needs to be housed. These are all utilised on a regular basis by staff and more rarely by members of the public. Solutions should allow for future growth, alteration and take into account the varying demands of the public, the Council and the botanical community.
27. The Botanic Gardens is envisaged as a facility that can support the science community and provide limited opportunities for research and the development of students and knowledge in the academic environment. To this end it is important that there is opportunity to provide space and facilities (generally computer facilities and bench space for prep.) for both post and under-graduate students to work within the Botanic Gardens environment.

28. Permanent staff within the Gardens have core duties that involve research and need to be accommodated within the facilities. These generally include seed cleaning, preparation and storage, sample storage and maintenance of plant records.

THE OBJECTIVES

29. The key objective is to prepare the existing site for the new building(s), construct a sustainable combined visitor and staff facility to meet the requirements of the City Council, Botanic Gardens staff and the general public, and to find suitable accommodation for staff until the new facility is available for use.

THE OPTIONS

30. See paragraphs 33 and 34.

THE PREFERRED OPTION

31. To proceed with the design competition based on the current budget and appoint a lead consultant to commence design and drawings. A service-vehicle-only bridge will be included in the scope of the project (leading to the back of the nursery) and this will be subject to additional funding through the LTCCP process at a later date. In the meantime, the consultant will be asked to design and construct a temporary bridge into the site to avoid vehicle traffic from Rolleston Avenue, thus minimising disruption to the Botanic Gardens.
32. To apply for separate funding through the LTCCP/Annual Plan process for the construction of a service vehicle access bridge, linking the site to the Armagh Street driveway.

ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS

The Preferred Option

33. See point 32

	Benefits (current and future)	Costs (current and future)
Social	A focal point in the gardens for information, education, dining and retail.	Ongoing operational costs.
Cultural	N/A	
Environmental	Sustainable strategies and technologies to be employed.	Upfront cost of green technologies.
Economic	Centre to be designed within available budget.	Additional funding may be required and this will be submitted through the LTCCP.

Extent to which community outcomes are achieved:

There is clearly a need for both an upgrade to staff facilities and a centre that meets the needs of the huge numbers of visitors to the Gardens each year.

Impact on the Council's capacity and responsibilities:

Responsibility to run and maintain the new facility to an acceptable standard.

Effects on Maori:

Mahaanui Kurataiao Limited has been identified as a key stakeholder and will be kept informed of the project.

Consistency with existing Council policies:

This project is a major capital project in the Council's Long-Term Council Community Plan 2006-2016.

Views and preferences of persons affected or likely to have an interest:

Environment Canterbury – regular communication.

University of Canterbury – communication with Professor Paula Jameson (Head of School, Biological Sciences).

Friends of the Gardens – regular stakeholder contact and discussion.

Botanic Gardens staff.

Other relevant matters:

Ellerslie Flower Show - timing/staging of construction with an increase of visitor numbers.

Maintain the Status Quo (if not preferred option)

34. Maintaining the status quo

	Benefits (current and future)	Costs (current and future)
Social	Visual amenity of Gardens will remain if construction does not proceed	Inadequate visitor facilities and staff areas.
Cultural	No disruption to Potts Lawn	N/A
Environmental	No disruption to the Gardens.	Continued use of old technologies
Economic	Extensive saving of capital budget if the project does not go ahead. However ongoing maintenance costs.	Ongoing costs of repairing / replacing poor buildings and equipment
Extent to which community outcomes are achieved: The status quo will result in little or minimal disruption to the Gardens but will not meet the requirements of both residents and visitors to the city. Impact on the Council's capacity and responsibilities: Clearly this is a large capital project and will consume much time and resource. It is anticipated that the Capital Programme Group will lead a project team comprising of Council staff and selected consultants. Effects on Maori: N/A Consistency with existing Council policies: N/A Views and preferences of persons affected or likely to have an interest: Generally positive support for the chosen location and a new facility. Other relevant matters:		