



Merivale Precinct Society

Incorporated under the Charitable Trusts Act 1957
P.O.Box 36397, Merivale, CHRISTCHURCH

CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL DRAFT LONG TERM COMMUNITY PLAN 2004

The Merivale Precinct Society wishes to comment on the Council's Community Plan and its vision for Christchurch. The Mayor's introduction states; "There is more listening to the community, working together and focussing on what matters." The Society fervently hopes that Council will listen very carefully to residents' concerns, because for the Merivale community, it appears to be otherwise.

HERITAGE

Recently the Society went through a long convoluted process negotiating with Council and other interested parties to have Leinster House preserved in perpetuity in Merivale for future generations. There was no intention to ask for a hand out at the expense of ratepayers. It was a commitment from the community to work in partnership with Council to achieve an outcome that was dear to the hearts of the people of Merivale. It could well have been a blueprint for saving other historic buildings of significance in other areas of Christchurch. All that was needed was an opportunity. In Merivale, the loss of heritage, is significant and devastating. Internationally, heritage is seen as something to be treasured and protected and the opportunity to destroy historic buildings is impossible. Now that the Resource Management Act has been amended, heritage is of "national importance", and it is therefore, imperative that Council shows commitment to heritage. The Society asks that more funding be set aside. It appears that money could be made available as has been done with a "flat water facility" which, as yet, is still waiting for a site. The difference is that heritage is an urgent issue. A heritage package for the whole of Christchurch is required. Every suburb needs to be assessed and a certain number of significant landmark buildings protected. There are too many delays and bureaucratic processes preventing early intervention where heritage is concerned. There must also be some way to ensure owners of heritage buildings with covenants or listings are required to maintain them properly. Heritage precincts should also be considered. Too much is made of picking certain areas only for attention. It cannot be emphasised enough that Christchurch as a whole must be taken into account.

TREE PROTECTION

Tree protection is not working. Protected trees are subject to too much abuse as demand for land for building purposes often means that protected trees are damaged, or worse, deliberately cut down. Labels often disappear. Recently units have been built too close to a protected tree in Rugby Street and in Merivale Lane two protected trees have been cut down. Developers prefer to clear fell sections and take the consequences of a fine which these days is not a deterrent at all. There are also problems with owners of cross lease town houses refusing to contribute to a protected tree which is part of the complex. The owner closest to it

has to take full responsibility for pruning and clearing leaves etc. If the person is elderly or ill it compounds the problem. Funding needs to be available for such cases where there is hardship. All protected trees require a properly qualified arborist to do any pruning required. The most effective way to stop trees disappearing from the City is to ensure trees of a certain height and dimension are automatically protected. Christchurch can ill afford to lose so many mature trees which have taken years to grow. As well as their aesthetic value, trees attract birds, provide shade from the sun and assist in removing pollution. There is no doubt that the loss of a significant amount of the tree canopy directly relates to a noticeable increase in pollution. In some parts of Merivale, hot spots are being created where green space and trees have been destroyed.

PARKS & WATERWAYS MAINTENANCE

Very little funding appears to be set aside for the on going maintenance needs in parks and along waterways. Pruning exotic trees such as cherries and walnuts is being neglected. Native plants are growing rapidly and thickly in many parks and by water throughout urban Christchurch. A 'wilderness' effect is being created with little thought to long term management. The once open plan designs of parks which were a security factor for all has been completely upset by a programme of planting with little thought for design. Natives have been over planted and often encroach onto pathways, block out extensive areas of water and as time goes on there will be a loss of good shade trees during the hot summer months as the natives being planted are not canopy trees that give protection to walkers. Far from seeing all the wildlife on the water one can only hear it! Has Council really given thought to the long term effects of this type of planting? One must have balance in nature. There have been good wetland areas developed such as Travis Swamp and Styx but inner Christchurch needs a moderate approach to such planting. Funnily enough birds such as the wood pigeon are far too heavy for the type of native planting being done. They are often seen and roost in the Botanic Gardens. If cutting back and thinning out is left much longer there is going to be considerable expense for Council as the contrived man-made bush gets out of control!

LITTER

Christchurch is being blitzed with litter. Streets close to fast food outlets need help. Shopping centres and malls require extra attention. Council's policy of zero tolerance to litter is commendable but it isn't happening. Please put back litter bins and in areas where the problem is particularly bad place extra bins. There is always going to be the lowest denominator that will litter but many residents are quite happy to pick up litter if there is a bin close by. Isn't it time that businesses that attract rubbish took an active role in clearing it up? In Merivale, every time there is a major game on at Jade stadium, the young in the area get very drunk and walk the streets creating havoc. Broken bottles and takeaways are a Sunday morning chore. That does not include the damage to road signs, letter boxes and fences.

UNDERGROUNDING

As the result of a city wide petition several years ago the Council increased funding so more undergrounding could be done especially to the older parts of Christchurch. Once again a decision has been made to cut that funding. The state of some streets is deplorable with street trees growing into the wires and the added safety hazard of posts along streets. Please make a concerted effort to accelerate the undergrounding of overhead wires by additional funding.

STREET MAINTENANCE

Much of older Christchurch has suffered from lack of action with regard to street upgrading. Too much temporary work such as patching, renewing part of a street or one side is not fair. This is a core service that residents expect and should have honoured. Many streets in Merivale are waiting for upgrading and in close proximity to the shopping centre the footpaths are in a shocking state. The area is not user friendly for wheelchairs and the disabled when one takes into account the number of nursing facilities, retirement and convalescent homes in Merivale. More funding should be allocated. The City must be receiving an enormous amount of money from resource consents in the area. Surely this revenue should be returned to Merivale.

STREET GARDENS

Council asks residents to take ownership of their street gardens and for some this is fine. Thought must be given to the elderly and the ill. People have the best of intentions but circumstances do not always allow the time to do the extra. It would be helpful if the Council contractor was more fastidious and thorough when doing the street gardens. Recently Aikmans Road was in an appalling state and the contractor was called out. The job done was so poor that he was called back a second time. Residents quickly become disillusioned if the street becomes scruffy. Roundabouts and large expanses of gardens outside schools for example quickly go into the too hard basket. Regular thorough maintenance by the contractor will encourage residents to do their little bit in between times.

REVIEW OF THE HAGLEY PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Society is very concerned that any work undertaken to the entrance of Hagley Park must have regard for the Hagley Park Management Plan. At present the park is being used heavily for trade shows, commercial enterprises and even private functions such as a wedding reception. These activities run contrary to the objectives and policies of the Hagley Park Management Plan and need to be addressed urgently. Trees in the park are being increasingly stressed by illegal parking. Removing the Meikle Gates or relocating them further into the park could be quite detrimental. The Society would prefer that they remain where they are and a proper review be undertaken of the whole of Hagley Park under the auspices of the Hagley Park Management Plan.

SHUTTLE/TRAM SERVICE

Would Council consider extending the shuttle or possibly the tram service to Merivale? The Victoria Street shopping Precinct, Casino, travellers' accommodation leading into Merivale's shopping and restaurant/café experience may encourage more people to travel on public transport. Encourage a closer link with the inner city.

COLOMBO STREET BUS DEBACLE

Unfortunately the bus exchange and Colombo Street has changed the whole public transport experience. An element has taken over the pavements lounging and hanging out making it very difficult for shoppers to negotiate the footpath. The buses and bus stops have had the glass etched with graffiti. Isn't it about time that this area got cleaned up, policed properly

and returned to a pleasant state. If Council wants to encourage people back into the City centre make it a safe and enjoyable experience.

TOURIST CHARGES

Christchurch is very generous to tourists. Many attractions are free. Mona Vale is a classic example with bus loads going through the gardens at the expense of the rate payer. It is time to charge for these attractions. Mona Vale is always short staffed yet it is a credit to the garden staff who work there that the gardens look so beautiful. Granted there is help from various specialist societies such as the Canterbury Rose Society, Heritage Rose etc. Other attractions such as the Art Gallery, Provincial Chambers and Museum could charge. It won't deter tourists who are used to far heavier charges overseas including tipping. Alternatively, what about a tax on hotel rooms?

DECENTRALISATION

The Service Centres are being under utilised. Recently Fendalton/Waimairi got a brand new building but all the staff have moved back to town. Its frustrating for residents who would much prefer to deal with staff locally than making a special trip into town. Planning and traffic staff should be in the community.

TRAFFIC & CAR PARKING CONGESTION IN MERIVALE

Merivale has an enormous traffic problem which has to be addressed while there are still some options left. Commitment is needed from Council to assist residents and businesses alike to find a long term solution to the congestion problems.

The Society wishes to be heard in support of this submission.

Gina Williamson
Chairperson
Merivale Precinct Society.

5th May 2004