

3. NORTH HAGLEY PARK SHARED PATHWAY

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| Corporate Plan Output: 9.5.86 Cycleways -Hagley Park Cycle Routes. | |

The purpose of this report is to advise on progress of the project to develop a shared pathway along the northern boundary of North Hagley Park and to gain approval for its implementation from both the Parks and Recreation and City Services Committees.

PROGRESS

The project to develop the pathway was presented to and received both Committees' approval in principle last November and was subsequently released for public consultation. The result of the consultation was reported at the March meeting of the City Services Committee. It was the intention of staff to report to the Parks and Recreation Committee's April meeting to gain approval. However the Council, at its March meeting, referred the proposal to this combined meeting for consideration by both Committees.

BACKGROUND

Hagley Park serves as one of two primary cycling focal points within the city's network (the other being the city centre). The Cycle Network Plan identifies the need for improved facilities in and around Hagley Park. The proposed pathway development and its associated cycle works are part of the identified improvements within the Cycle Network Plan and are now scheduled for implementation within the 2001/02 year.

The primary objective of this project is to improve the safety, access and flow of cyclists and other park users by providing an all weather park pathway running parallel to Harper Avenue from the Fendalton Road corner to the Carlton Mill corner.

The pathway will provide cyclists currently using Harper Avenue with the option to use an off road path. Recent cycle counts over three hours of peak period showed that 195 cyclists used Harper Avenue and a further 85 used the existing informal paths running parallel to Harper Avenue ie where the proposed path is to be developed. High proportions of cyclists in this area are school aged (at peak cycling periods one third to two thirds of all cyclists in the immediate area).

In addition this pathway will also provide the final link in a sealed pathway running around the perimeter of North Hagley Park. This will provide a major enhancement to the park by allowing access or easier access for many recreational users. This includes wheel chair users, people with prams, in line skaters, scooter users, walkers and toddlers learning to use their first bikes etc.

The City Streets Unit has worked in conjunction with the management staff of Hagley Park, who consider this proposal to be both beneficial and in harmony with the Management Plans for the Park. The Management Plan's Policy Section states an objective 'to promote Hagley Park as a venue for passive and informal activities'. Cycling is listed within the definition of informal activities under the plan. A second objective under the heading 'Circulation', states "To provide safe, logical access and circulation around the park for cyclists, pedestrians, joggers and people in wheelchairs". It would no doubt have included reference to some of the more recent wheeled forms of recreation if they too had existed at the plan's 1991 commencement, following its philosophy of inclusion rather than exclusion.

PATHWAY ALTERNATIVES

Two shared pathway alternatives were considered for this project, these were:

- 1 Provision of a 2.5m wide sealed park pathway running from the Carlton Mill Bridge corner, and following the existing gravel pathway that runs along the boundary fence for the entire length up to the Fendalton Road/Deans Avenue corner.

Advantages: Provides better park access for a wider section of the public, some of which are currently excluded from this length of the park (wheeled users).

Increases safety of cyclists -cyclists currently using Harper Avenue will have a practical alternative off-road route, with no exposure to vehicles.

During the hours of darkness this alignment gains some light spill from the Harper Avenue lights and is also close to the Avenue in terms of informal surveillance from passing traffic for its entire length.

Disadvantages: The entire length is close to Harper Avenue and is affected by traffic noise, visual intrusion and fumes.

There is little room off the north side of the path (due to trees and the boundary fence), for path users should they need it for overtaking or avoidance manoeuvres.

The need for closer supervision of young children using the path due to the style of fence and the paths close proximity to the roadside.

Removes the entire gravel path which some runners and walkers prefer as an all year low impact surface.

Visually, Harper Avenue will seem even wider.

2. Provision of a 2.5m wide sealed park pathway running from the Carlton Mill Bridge corner, and following the existing gravel pathway that runs along the boundary fence until nearing the existing sealed pathway that runs to the signalised pedestrian and cycle crossing on Harper Avenue. From here the path will flow further into the park to run between the two most southern rows of mature trees (just north of the golf course) to link up with the two existing sealed paths that lead to Fendalton Road and within the park, parallel to Deans Avenue.

Advantages: Provides better park access for a wider section of the public, some of which are currently excluded from this length of the park (wheeled users).

Increases safety of cyclists – cyclists currently using Harper Avenue will have a practical alternative off-road route, with no exposure to vehicles.

Offers the maximum amenity benefits possible to path users by providing a park like experience in the section running between the two rows of mature trees (north of the golf course) which is away from the immediate roadside.

There is ample room on both sides of the path throughout the section running between the two rows of mature trees to allow path users to undertake overtaking or avoidance manoeuvres.

Disadvantages: During the hours of darkness the pathway section running between the two rows of mature trees -gains no light spill from Harper Avenue and will require specific lighting – will have little informal surveillance from passing traffic on Harper Avenue.

There is a higher chance of being hit by a golf ball from the adjoining golf course.

Both pathway alternatives have been planned in harmony with Hagley Park's tree programming. Staff have aligned the pathways to follow Hagley Park's felling and replanting schedules so that no trees are being removed because of either of the proposed pathways.

Both pathways have a cost estimated to be \$120,000. This does not include lighting costs, which will need to be assessed, and its priority set against other demands on future budgets.

CONSULTATION

Over 200 pamphlets were distributed to park users (within 50 metres of the proposed path) during the first half of January. The pamphlets were displayed in the visitor centre at the Botanical Gardens. Pamphlets were also sent to the YMCA in Hereford Street (very popular starting point for runners and walkers using Hagley Park) and Christchurch Girls High School. In December pamphlets were sent to the usual recipients such as Community Board, Parks and Recreation Committee, City Services Committee members, service centres and libraries.

Whilst an oversight was made in overlooking sending a pamphlet to the Hagley Golf Club, its views were represented within the City Service Committee's 6 March meeting, at which a deputation from the club was also made.

All views expressed on the proposal, both prior to the pamphlet's suggested return date - 12 February, and up to the present, have been included within this report.

The level of consultation undertaken is considered appropriate and has provided both an understanding of views and a firm indication of public support for this project.

We received **38 replies**, of which:

27 were supportive: 2 group/26 individual responses (groups: SPOKES – local cycle advocate group and Christchurch Avon Athletic Club)

8 were non-supportive: 4 group/4 individual responses

3 were in regard to unrelated matters

There were eight objectors: Richard Hallifax (nearby resident), ICON (neighbourhood group), Mary O'Connor (keen runner), Mrs Eliot (keen walker), Hagley Golf Club, Christ's College, Christchurch Civic Trust (amenity group), Athletics Canterbury (Runner's Committee).

The eight non-supportive responses raised a number of issues which are subsequently grouped below:

1. No statistics to suggest a sealed path is justified (1 response: O'Connor)
2. No pressing use for the cyclists in this area (1 response: Hallifax)
3. The existing gravel path will suffice (2 responses: Hallifax, Civic Trust)
4. The road and existing path are enough, no need for any more paths/asphalting (1 response: ICON)
5. Path not justified: existing cycleways will suffice (1 response: O'Connor)
6. Existing sealed-circuit options within park are adequate for wheeled users (1 response: O'Connor)
7. No need to seal path as schoolboys use the two existing cycleways through the golf course (Christ's College)
8. No figures on usage to measure the success of proposed sealed pathway (1 response: O'Connor)
9. Cycle-lanes on Harper Avenue instead – would reduce congestion on Carlton Mill Bridge/safer to keep east bound cyclists remaining on left-hand of road (1 response O'Connor)

- **Council response:** The Council conducts annual cycle counts at morning and afternoon peak commuter times (totalling 3 hours). In 2000, the **minimum** volumes of daily cycle traffic in this 3-hour period were 195 cyclists along Harper Avenue and 85 cyclists along the parallel Hagley Park paths. The Council also anticipates that the volume of cycle traffic along this stretch will increase with the future upgrading of the Carlton Mill Bridge to better cater for cyclists. These statistics are used to assess the need for specific facilities and also to measure the success of such facilities.

That the existing gravel path is more than adequate as a hard surface to ride on: the Council has received correspondence from the public calling for a sealed pathway running around the perimeter of North Hagley Park. The park users who would particularly like to see the construction of **sealed** paths includes wheel chair users, people with prams, in-line skaters, scooter users, walkers of a range of abilities and the parents of toddlers learning to ride their first bicycles. Gravel is not appropriate surfacing for these people. The path is intended to be a major enhancement for recreational park users and not merely an alternative for cyclists travelling along Harper Avenue. Hence cycle-lanes along Harper Avenue are not considered in this proposal, as these would cater solely for cyclists.

10. Sealing means increased numbers of path users which means increased conflict between path users and golfers: in the course of a day numerous wayward golf balls pose the risk of personal injury to path users (1 response: Civic Trust).
11. Further dangers: golf balls will ricochet from the sealed pathway with unpredictable consequences (1 response: Civic Trust)
12. The proximity of the proposed path to the golf course: worried that future users may be hit by straying golf balls (1 response: Eliot)
13. Wayward shots may bounce off asphalt and hit Harper Avenue cars/pathway pedestrians (1 response: Hagley Golf Club)

- **Council response:** The Council is aware of the possibility of this situation. It is also aware that currently wayward shots already pose danger all around the pathways through the golf course. The problem with the number 8 green is that golfers may aim for this green with some force (attempting to get a hole in one) when it is only 5 m away from the proposed pathway. Certainly it is expected that each golf player will use prudent judgement based on their ability knowing that they are individually liable for any consequences of their shot. Currently several greens on the course are within 6 m of a sealed pathway.

14. Re-rating of course boundaries/reprinting of score cards, and possible changes to No 8 green at cost of \$15,000 (1 response: Hagley Golf Club)

- **Council response:** Council staff have contacted the New Zealand Golf Association and the local district rating convenor who advised that it was unlikely that the club would need to undertake any such re-rating due to the proposed pathway, at a cost of \$15,000.

The district convenor has now advised that due to a misunderstanding initially – a re-rating of the course will be required if the path runs between the two rows of mature trees. The course is currently rated as a 118 course and is estimated to rise to a 120 if re-rated by the path.

15. Pathway would lead to the loss of 8 oaks (1 response: Civic Trust)
 - **Council response:** 10 oaks are ear-marked for removal due to disease and will be felled over the next 10 years – this is nothing to do with the proposed pathway.
16. Sealed cycle-ways displace the 'natural' paths of runners/walkers at the expense of their ankles/knees/hips (1 response: O'Connor)
17. Proposed pathway will interfere with cross-country running course (1 response: O'Connor)
18. Existing dirt path is excellent for schoolboys to run upon (1 response: Christ's College)
19. Leave the existing gravel path for runners (1 response: Athletics Canterbury)
 - **Council response:** The proposed alignment of the path will allow for those who wish to run on a 'natural' dirt surface to continue to do. They can run on dirt through the pine trees at the Carlton Mill Bridge end of the path. The existing dirt desire lines of runners, through the avenue of oaks, spans a width of approximately 4 metres, so the proposed width of 2.5 would leave desire lines untouched on either side. The wishes of Christchurch Avon Athletic Club have been incorporated into the Council's preferred alignment of the proposed pathway, see point 8 of the Supportive Responses.
20. Hagley Park should be left as lawns and trees, not sealed pathways (1 response: Athletics Canterbury)
21. Proposed pathways should be 2m, not 2.5m (1 response Civic Trust)
22. Sealed pathways threaten/impact-on the park-like atmosphere (2 responses: Hallifax, O'Connor)
23. Shared use pathways are always a negative feature in Christchurch (1 response: ICON)
 - **Council response:** Access for all to this kind of park land setting is important to people and hence the need for sealed path facilities. Building two separate sealed paths would have too great an impact on the setting, especially in light of the existing runners' dirt desire lines along this stretch of the Park. Hence one path is opted for, of 2.5m width. This meets the current standard: 2 metres was the old standard, which has since been revised. SPOKES would like to see a 3 metre wide path.
24. Carlton Mill Bridge is a squeeze point at the edge of the proposed pathway (1 response O'Connor)
25. Worried that next the gravel path parallel to Park Terrace will be sealed – to create a sealed circuit without crossing Carlton Mill Bridge (1 response O'Connor)
26. The proposal may encourage wheeled users to cross Carlton Mill Bridge in search of sealed paths along Park Terrace (1 response: O'Connor)
 - **Council response:** Carlton Mill Bridge traffic capacity and its associated traffic management problems (relating to pedestrian, cyclist and crossing issues) are currently under review by City Streets. Capital funding will be used to address these problems in approximately two years.
27. A detailed plan has not yet been produced (1 response Civic Trust)
 - **Council response:** The plans were kept simple in the earliest stages, keeping the concept clear for public consultation, whilst being the most informative approach for one page of A4.
28. Sealing paths encourage more people to use them and therefore more chance of collisions between different path users (1 response Civic Trust)
 - **Council response:** Encouraging more people to use the path is exactly what this project aims for. It is not possible to engineer-out all possible collision scenarios on a 2.5m wide path.
29. Personal security – without lighting passing motorists will not be able to see incidents on the pathway (1 response Civic Trust)
 - **Council response:** To what extent are there incidents along this stretch already, for which motorists stop and intervene? When the Council budget has provision for lighting, it is intended to provide it.

30. A pathway closer to Harper Avenue is the preference of the Cycling Unit (1 response Civic Trust)
 - **Council response:** A personal opinion of a staff member and not the opinion of the City Streets Unit.
31. Seal closer to existing road/gravel pathway (1 response: Christ's College)
 - Please refer to earlier section on pathway alternatives.
32. Proposed pathway is not consistent with policies within the Hagley Park Management Plan 1991: (2 responses: Civic Trust, O'Connor):
 - (a) Informal tracks shall not be sealed and where practical, shall be retained as natural paths (O'Connor, Civic Trust)
See points 1-9 regarding the needs of wheel chair users, people with prams, in-line skaters, scooter users, walkers of all abilities and toddlers riding their first bicycles.
 - (b) Where practical cyclists and pedestrian paths shall be kept separate (O'Connor)
See points 20-23 regarding the construction of two separate sealed paths having a greater impact on the setting.
 - (c) Cycleways shall be lit (Civic Trust)
See point 29 regarding when the Council budget has provision for lighting.
 - **Council response:** The 1991 Hagley Park Management Plan is now 10 years old and situations have changed. The pathway was planned in liaison with the Parks Unit which, as stewards of the Management Plan, recognise this as a positive asset for the park.

27 supportive responses were received:

10 of these responses used the very words: this idea is GREAT.

Within the 27 supportive responses, further requests were made for:

1. An improved level of general maintenance for paths and lighting within Hagley Park (5 responses)
2. Lines, symbols or signs to warn/separate wheeled users and those on foot (4 responses)
3. A 3m wide path, not 2.5m (1 response by SPOKES - local cycle advocate group)
4. Lighting now, not at a later date (2 responses, including Christchurch Avon Athletic Club)
5. An alignment closer to road (1 response)
6. An alignment kept away from road, due to car fumes (1 response)
7. Distance markers along the path's length (1 response)
8. The portion that runs from the Carlton Mill Bridge to the first sealed pathway crossing be placed over the existing gravel track to protect cross-country running courses, not through the pines (sufficient room either side of proposed pathway through the avenue of oaks which follows thereafter) – 1 response (Christchurch Avon Athletic Club)
9. A decent camber with no wooden upstands at the pathway edges (1 response)

Overall the consultation responses have been extremely positive and we have endeavoured to meet those requests that met the objectives of the project.

CONCLUSION

The Cycle Network Plan has identified what the recent cycle counts on the ground have demonstrated – that there is a need for an off road pathway along the northern boundary linking east to west. The closest major school has responded positively to the project and recognised its usefulness for pupils. In the last 12 months in accidents involving vehicles, one third of the cyclists injured or killed were children. Up to two thirds of cyclists at peak periods are children in this area.

The absence of any sealed pathway along this whole length is a serious restriction not only to people wanting wheeled recreational pursuits but also for people with prams and wheelchairs. Whilst it has been very nice for runners and walkers to have largely exclusive use of this area there is more than enough room available to share and still retain ample running paths.

There are a number of specific advantages and disadvantages associated to each of the pathway alignments, however either of the pathways will provide safe and better access to a large stretch of North Hagley Park for a wider section of the public.

Both pathway alignments are considered valuable assets that the park's management team is enthusiastic in gaining for the public.

Both pathways are congruent with the Hagley Park Management Plan and its philosophy of inclusion rather than exclusion.

Primarily what separates the pathway alignment alternatives is that the preferred, number 2 path provides a far higher amenity value to users. It also gives a moderately higher level of user safety for manoeuvring but offers less safety regarding being hit by golf balls and also during the hours of darkness. It will need more specific lighting than the alternative pathway, although as the trees on the fence line mature the difference may be minimal.

It is for these reasons that the authors of this report have a preference for the shared path alignment detailed as alternative number 2 and are recommending its adoption by the Committees.

Recommendation: That the Parks and Recreation Committee and the City Services Committee adopt the proposal that a sealed shared pathway be provided along the northern boundary of North Hagley Park –as described in the report as alternative number 2.

City Services Committee

Chairman's

Recommendation:

1. That an off-road sealed shared path be provided in Hagley Park on the south side of and parallel to Harper Avenue.
2. That the joint committees view the options and decide which to recommend to the Council, following further consultation on the preferred option, with interested parties.