

10. RICHMOND PARK – PROPERTY PURCHASE

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The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval to purchase the property at 39 Medway Street as an addition to Richmond Park. The property will provide a new pedestrian entrance and will open up a secluded area of the park, providing a safer environment with greater recreational appeal.

PARK LOCALITY AND CATCHMENT

Richmond Park (3.68ha) is situated between Woodchester Avenue and Poulton Avenue. Without a large road frontage, the reserve is relatively secluded. Marian College is next to the park on the north-west side.

Richmond Park is an important district park in an area still increasing in population and affected by infill housing. It serves a large catchment area bound by the Avon River, Burwood Park, St Albans Park and Avebury Park. (It has not drastically changed since 1940, when the park was first formed.)

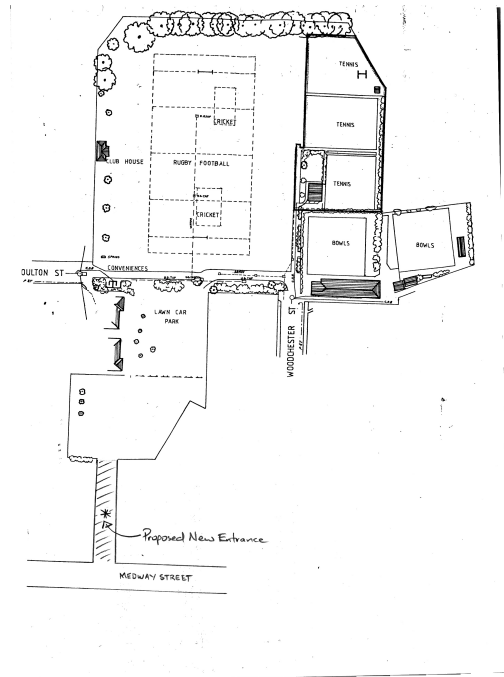
PARK USE

Shirley Tennis and Shirley Bowling Clubs lease parts of the park and the main area is fully utilised for cricket and rugby. A small playground area is located on a corner of the park, adjacent to Poulton Avenue.

The remaining open space area of the park (5000m²) is used partly for vehicle parking but a large landlocked area remains behind this car park, surrounded by neighbouring residential properties (see plan of park). For many years this southern corner of the park has been a featureless, secluded area because of its isolated nature. It would be on the northern side by elderly persons' housing.

The proposed entrance of Medway Street will provide pedestrian and cycle access from another street to the park and relieve some congestion on those streets. The existing secluded area of the park will be opened up and provide a safer environment with greater recreational appeal.

The area could be developed to complement the existing houses and new town house development now surrounding the secluded area. A passive "garden" area could then be created to complement the active sport areas of the park.



The local community comprises mainly families, with Marian College, Shirley Boys' High School and Avonside Girls' High School all nearby. A Council elderly persons' complex is in Poulton Avenue and some new town houses have been built on larger sections around the park.



PARK LAYOUT AND SAFETY

The park is completely enclosed by neighbouring residential properties. The layout is contrary to the Council's "Safer Parks" objectives and is an example of what we are trying to avoid in terms of new park layout and design.

The Medway Street end of the park is set some distance back off the remaining park and has very poor sight-lines which allow only a little casual surveillance from people passing by. This area has been left undeveloped for this reason to date. Security from properties surrounding the park has increased, however, with recent in-fill town houses being built with formal living areas that overlook this area. With the Medway property used as a new entrance, security should increase dramatically.



COMMUNITY CHANGES

Increasingly, the local community is changing in terms of older houses with larger sections being replaced with multi-unit developments with very small areas of open space. There does need to be an investment in open space to off-set these changes. Richmond Park will also need to change from purely sports delivery to a more community-based park, where local residents can spend time in a more friendly garden-type environment where a greater level of social engagement can take place. This purchase will help activate this process of engaging the changing community into planning their local park to suit their needs.

PROPERTY PURCHASE

To assess the property's value the Council engaged the services of Ford Baker, Registered Public Valuers, and following discussions with the owners, agreement has been reached to acquire the property, subject to Council approval. The details of the settlement are covered in the Public Excluded section of this report.



SOURCE OF FUNDS

Provision has been included within the District Sports Reserve Purchase Fund for the purchase of the property in the current financial year.

CONCLUSION

The Parks and Waterways Unit has been aware of the undesirable layout of Richmond Park for some time. The park has previously been identified as part of the Parks Unit Asset Management Programme as one that will require property acquisition to improve the layout, safety and usage of the reserve. Purchase on the grounds of the "Safer Parks" policy is justifiable and although it is not in one of the areas of high open space deficiency, it is important to note that opportunities do not always arise in the highest priority areas coinciding with changes in the local community. As a consequence of greater infill housing, it is paramount that we re-invest in social capital and provide more space for the local community where greater levels of social engagement can take place. This purchase will help activate managing these changes with the local community.

The property owner offered the property to the Council prior to listing because of his awareness of the issue. The property is the last one on Medway Street adjoining the park, which has not been subdivided.

The Parks and Waterway Unit recommends that the property at 39 Medway Street be purchased as an addition to Richmond Park, to improve the design and layout of the existing park, thus providing a safer park environment for all users.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the property at 39 Medway Street be purchased for the purpose of Recreation Reserve in accordance with the settlement details outlined in the public excluded section of this report.
 2. That subject to (1) above the Council resolve to classify the reserve pursuant Section 16 of the Reserves Act 1977 as a Recreation Reserve under Section 17 of the Act.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.