

7. ROTHESAY RECREATION CORRIDOR

Officer responsible Park and Waterways Unit Manager	Author Kelly Hansen - Parks and Waterways Planner, DDI 371-1688
Corporate Plan Output: Plans and Policy Statements 9.4.42	

The purpose of this report is to seek a decision regarding treatment of the poplar trees bounding Bottle Lake Forest Park along Rothesay Road.

CONTEXT OF REPORT

For several years there has been ongoing debate regarding the future of the existing poplar trees along the unformed Rothesay Road. Following a number of enquiries from residents, a survey was conducted in June 1998, in the area around Anglesea Ave and Forest Park Drive (approximately 180 households), regarding residents' preference for the future of the trees. A petition to remove the trees, signed by 17 households, was submitted to the Council. It was resolved that the Board meet with Mr Bill Studholme from the Selwyn Plantation Board to discuss the removal of trees which pose a safety risk and environmental nuisance to residents in the area. Trees were subsequently pruned and a section of damaged trees was removed.

At an on-site meeting in September 2000, attended by representatives of Council staff, the Selwyn Plantation Board, residents, and the Burwood/Pegasus Community Board, it was agreed that a second survey of local residents would be undertaken. It was felt that the first survey had covered too wide an area when most of the impact of the trees was felt by direct neighbours. The second survey took place in May 2001.

Prevailing views regarding the value of the poplar trees are polarised. Despite there being a long term plan for the Rothesay Recreation Corridor outlined in the Bottle Lake Forest Park Management Plan, no consensus has been reached as to what should be done in the short term with the existing poplar trees. No funding is currently available for development of the Rothesay Recreation Corridor.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are mixed views within the local community as to whether the poplar trees along Rothesay Road should be retained or removed. A landscape proposal plan for the Rothesay Recreation Corridor exists within the Bottle Lake Forest Park Management Plan. No funding is yet available for its implementation. It is recommended that the poplar trees remain until funding is available to implement the planting plan.

RELEVANT CURRENT POLICY

The Bottle Lake Forest Park Management Plan contains a Landscape Proposal Plan for an area known as the Rothesay Recreation Corridor. The corridor is essentially based around a 100 metre wide strip of land extending from and running parallel with the residential boundary edge which is the unformed Rothesay Road. The idea is to create a number of recreational tracks that pass through a series of distinctive vegetated areas (open woodland, native coastal duneland bush). Small open space nodes along the tracks would provide the opportunity for rest and meeting places. The Council is required to comply with the management plan in developing the site.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

It is proposed that the remainder of the Rothesay Road poplar trees not be removed until funding is available to implement the Rothesay Recreation Corridor landscape proposal plan. The trees will be pruned if required to minimise risk to households of windthrow or breakage.

A detailed planting plan for the Rothesay Recreation Corridor is being prepared so that costings for implementation of the plan can be calculated and budgeted for. Currently, no funding is available for implementation of the plan.

In the short term, it may be possible to plant a small area within the Rothesay Road corridor where the poplar trees have already been removed (from 6 Willoughby Lane to 21 Millcroft Avenue). This will serve as a showcase of what is planned for the rest of the Rothesay corridor in the long term. Although the area has already been cleared of poplar trees, the young trees that have re-established will need to be removed before replanting occurs.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The poplar trees are an ageing asset that will eventually require removal. Although the trees currently appear to be in good health and condition, they are literally a growing concern. The trees are on a lean and have been forced to grow out towards the light, which unfortunately happens to be towards the residential properties. As the poplar trees continue to grow on this angle and remain one sided the risk of a tree falling over will increase. These trees have been sheltered by the pine plantation but this has now been harvested which, together with the fact that the trees are growing in sand, further adds to the likelihood of a failure occurring. While the trees currently do not appear to present a high risk to neighbouring properties, the risk will increase over time.

The Selwyn Plantation Board has indicated that it will take responsibility for removing the trees upon the Council's request. For cost effectiveness the Selwyn Plantation Board would remove all the trees at once rather than take out small blocks. Once the trees are removed, the Parks and Waterways Unit would be able to plant from the Rothesay Road boundary into the forestry road, a width of approximately 10-12m, without affecting forestry operations. Beyond the forestry road is a firebreak and then forestry pine trees. The proposed plan for planting north of the forestry road will require removing land from Selwyn Plantation Board's Forestry Licence.

A planting plan and cost estimate has been prepared for the area where the poplars have already been removed. The cost of site preparation, planting, and bark mulch for this small area of approximately 1,390m² is estimated at \$21,300. It may be possible to fund replanting of this area within current budgets. However, this will depend on the progress of other tree planting projects.

RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

There are mixed opinions as to whether or not the existing poplars should be retained or removed.

Arguments for removing the trees include:

- They may be a health and safety concern due to their size and close proximity to houses.
- The trees shade neighbouring properties.
- The trees lose their leaves causing a nuisance for neighbours.
- The trees attract possums to the area.

Arguments in favour of retaining the trees are:

- They are aesthetically pleasing.
- They serve as a screen to the forestry and landfill activities and proposed cell phone tower.
- They provide shelter from the wind.

In the June 1998 survey, 30 residents indicated their wish for the removal of the trees, 55 wished them to remain, and a further two households voted both for and against tree removal.

Of the survey forms returned in the May 2001 survey, 13 households indicated a preference to have the poplars removed and 18 households indicated a preference to retain the poplars.

In both surveys people were simply asked to tick their preferred option - remove the poplars or retain the poplars. No information was provided regarding planned replacement planting as outlined in the Rothesay Recreation Corridor Landscape Proposal Plan.

CONCLUSIONS

There is mixed feeling within the community about the future of the poplar trees. The trees currently serve as a screen to other activities within the forest and also provide shelter from the wind. However, the trees also cause some nuisance through shading, falling leaves, and pose an increasing risk to houses of windthrow and breakages.

As no funding is currently available to implement the Rothesay Recreation Corridor Landscape Proposal Plan, the existing poplar trees should remain until replacement planting is budgeted for and can be implemented. A small area where trees have already been removed could be planted if funding becomes available in the short term.

- Recommendations:**
1. That the existing poplar trees be retained until funding is available to implement the Rothesay Recreation Corridor Landscape Proposal Plan.
 2. That the area where the poplar trees have already been removed, from 6 Willoughby Lane to 21 Millcroft Avenue, be planted in accordance with the Rothesay Recreation Corridor Landscape Proposal as funding becomes available.

- Chairperson's Recommendations:**
1. That the abovementioned recommendations be adopted.
 2. That the Board seek funding for the Rothesay Recreation Corridor Landscape Proposal Plan in its submission on the Council's draft Annual Plan 2002/03.