

4. RESULTS OF REVIEW OF RIVERSIDE PLANTING SITES

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The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of the results of the review of riverside planting at two sites chosen by the Board in March 2004, and seek approval to implement various recommendations.

BACKGROUND

Following a deputation from the Merivale Precinct Society to the Parks Gardens and Waterways Committee in February 2004, expressing concerns about the effects of native planting along the banks of the Avon River adjacent to Little Hagley Park, the Committee decided that all the Community Boards could choose two riverside planting sites in their area for review by an independent landscape architect. The sites chosen by the Spreydon/Heathcote Community Board were:

Site 1: Heathcote River – behind the Opawa Children’s Library and Louisson Courts

Site 2: Heathcote River – upstream from Cashmere Hospital, Ashgrove Terrace

The matters raised for consideration, in addition to those mentioned in the March report, included:

Limited views of the Heathcote River

Pensioners in flats nearby are feeling hemmed in by the planting

Some inappropriate choice of plants and their location

Poor maintenance

Site two was also assessed on the difficulty of making a right-hand turn out of Fernihurst Street onto Cashmere Road and the loss of view of the river from Cashmere Road.

REVIEW

The review was carried out by Jenny Moore, ANZILA. Jenny carried out a site analysis, including river profile, vegetation character and site character. She then proceeded to explore opportunities to mitigate, through design and maintenance, any detracting outcomes of the planting. The report (to be tabled) includes photographs of the plantings, with notations. The conclusions are summarised below.

CONCLUSIONS

Site One: Heathcote River – behind the Opawa Children’s Library and Louisson Courts

The conclusions are stated in ‘**Opportunities for mitigation through design and maintenance.**’

1.1

An opportunity exists to thin out Flax, Toe Toe and some Hebes in strategic locations along the river bank, particularly where they occur opposite seats.

1.2

Hebe speciosa and Hebe diosmifolia will grow to approximately 1-1.2m high and provide an appropriate understorey to the existing mature Alder and Willow. A space between the top of this planting and the low canopy of the mature trees is maintained, creating a space and view through to the river.

1.3

Taller native species such as Cabbage Trees, Dodoneas and Pittosporums will grow to 3-4m high and compete with the existing mature species. In this situation, these native species will not grow to their full potential but just fill the space between the ground and canopy of existing mature trees, therefore causing a visual barrier between the path and the river.

1.4

Removal of some taller native species and thinning and pruning of existing exotic Alder, Poplar and Willow would lead to increased visual access to the river.

1.5

Physical access to the river is not appropriate because of the steepness of the bank. Appropriate access to the river is possible by the footbridge.

Site Two: Heathcote River –

2.0: View of the river from Cashmere Road

2.1

The river can easily be viewed by pedestrians walking along the footpath and there are opportunities to pause and rest along this route. Any thinning or removal of vegetation would expose Cashmere Road to the residents along Ashgrove Terrace.

2.2

A view to the river from Shalamar Drive is partially obscured by a fence opposite its junction with Cashmere Road. Otherwise, views to the river can be glimpsed through the stems of Mountain Beech, as Cashmere Road is approached, on foot and by vehicle, from Shalamar Drive. Pedestrians walking along the footpath on Cashmere Road also have glimpsed views of the river.

2.3

Glimpses of the river are experienced at Cashmere Bridge by pedestrians and vehicle passengers crossing the bridge. The removal of old Willow and Sycamore has enhanced this view.

2.4

It would be prudent to remove the *Cortaderia sellowiana* (Prince of Wales Feathers) from the riverbank, as these are noxious weeds and replace them with the native Toe Toe (*Cortaderia richardii*) or, alternatively, plant low growing plants which would reduce the need for grass maintenance on this steep bank.

3.0: Right hand turn into Cashmere Road and Ferniehurst Place

3.1

From my experience, the white barrier created a visual obstruction when making this traffic manoeuvre. Alterations to this barrier would improve traffic visibility.

3.2

New road markings at the Cashmere Road and Ferniehurst Place junction are proposed, to improve vehicle movement in this area.

3.3

Some thinning and pruning of higher vegetation by Smarts Bridge would help provide a clear view westwards along Cashmere Road.

Staff

Recommendation:

1. That the information be received.
2. That plant pruning, thinning and/or removal work be carried out on sites one and two, as recommended in the report.
3. That the report conclusions be passed on to all designers who have an input into riverside planting projects in Christchurch.
4. That riverside planting at the two sites be maintained in such a way that the detractions outlined in the report are prevented in the future.
5. That the recommendation regarding the traffic barrier (3.1) be forwarded to the Transport and City Streets Unit, for their consideration.

Chairperson's

Recommendation:

That the staff recommendation be supported. Since Site One needs to have the Toe Toe thinned out, for 2.4 the alternative of low-growing plants may be preferable.