

2. FERRIER PARK TREE SURVEY AND REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME

General Manager responsible:	General Manager City Environment
Officer responsible:	Greenspace Manager
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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to present a summary of an independent tree survey carried out in Ferrier Park, and seek a resolution on the recommendation of a preferred option for implementing a programme of tree removal along with the preparation of a landscape plan to undertake replacement planting of the park.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. In September 2004 a report was submitted to the Community Board requesting removal of a poplar tree from the reserve (adjacent to a property at 31 Balrudry Street). The other recommendation of the report was to undertake a wider and more comprehensive survey and consultation concerning the trees in the reserve.
3. A tree survey of the whole reserve has been undertaken over the summer months and the results summarised. A planting plan has been discussed with a landscape architect and is currently at the conceptual stage. No consultation with the community has been undertaken at this stage.
4. Ferrier Park is classified as a sports park of approximately three hectares in area. It is located off Nortons Road and is adjacent to the western boundary of Avonhead Primary School. The residential areas of Balrudry Street and Witty Road are situated to the north and south respectively. A walkway bisects the reserve and is primarily a main thoroughfare to the school from Nortons Road.
5. The layout of the tree population is essentially perimeter planting with an avenue along either side of the walkway. There are approx 160 trees in the reserve of which 40 are poplar species, being the most dominant in the landscape as well as in number. These are predominantly mature and located around the west and east perimeter. The avenue is comprised of young planted ash trees, whilst mixed planting exists along the north and south perimeters.
6. The poplar trees are of particular concern with fourteen identified as potentially hazardous due to their size, situation and the nature of the species (refer to **attached** independent arborist report -Arborlab – page 3). One tree (ID 55780) has been removed since September 2004 due to its poor condition and history of failure evident in the canopy of the tree.
7. The poplars can be grouped into three general areas; five on the east side of the park, north of the path, six on the west side of the park, north of the path and three on the east side of the park, south of the path. These groups are ranked in order of priority for attention.
8. Other tree issues include mature, semi-mature and juvenile trees in poor condition. In particular the line of relatively newly planted ash along the central walkway does not appear to have been successful, and yet, is potentially an important element in the amenity of the reserve.
9. There is general maintenance (pruning and removal) which needs to be undertaken, as well as monitoring. The majority of this work is on the poplars on the west side of the park, south of the path and trees along the southern perimeter, as well as miscellaneous trees throughout the reserve. It should be noted that, in the longer term, all of the poplar trees will need to be removed in favour of sub-canopy and newly planted trees or as they over mature. It is likely that the poplars were originally planted as shelter and it was probably always the intention that they would be removed as the other trees became established.
10. There are also some oaks and palms which have been transplanted within the reserve to reduce suppression amongst competing canopies of trees. These trees are generally situated along the western perimeter and on the eastern perimeter at the end of the walkway.
11. Landscaping opportunities therefore exist where groups of poplars currently exist, in particular along the western perimeter adjacent to Nortons Road frontage, and along and at ends of the walkway. However, to fulfil this potential the groups of poplars and ash will need to be removed.

12. With regard to the options for tree work, the need for major maintenance is widespread as there are many trees which are problematic, namely the majority of the poplars. However, remedial pruning on these is not considered practical. These trees are likely to continue to be a potential liability with ongoing maintenance still carrying a degree of risk and being costly. Therefore a comprehensive programme of tree removal is considered a better asset management option. This will initially have a high impact on the visual landscape of the park; hence the need for a landscape plan to identify the opportunity for replacement planting.
13. Other maintenance work needs to continue to meet with the general requirements for health and safety and enhancement of the amenity values of the trees in the reserve.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

14. Funding for the removal and replanting of the trees will need to be allocated in the 2005/06 & 2006/07 capital works programme for the Greenspace Unit. The current estimate for the high priority tree removal work is less than \$10,000.
15. Funding for the tree maintenance, pruning and minor works, will be available in the operational budget.
16. The trees are not listed as protected under the City Plan and no resource consents are required for this work.
17. Health & Safety, risk management, liability and insurance concerns exist if the tree work is deferred. This is particularly relevant given that we have an independent report that identifies safety concerns with a number of these trees.
18. All work will be carried out by a Council approved contractor with the appropriate health and safety and work site management controls in place.

OPTIONS

19. There are three possible options:

- (a) Do nothing or status quo.

This is not considered a viable option, as it would leave the Council highly exposed to a negligence claim in relation to any subsequent damage to persons or property given staff awareness of the condition of the trees.

- (b) Increase level of regular maintenance and implement a regular safety monitoring programme.

This option will not address the key issues in the long term and has the effect of simply deferring the cost of the ultimate action to some point in the future. The overall maintenance cost would be significantly increased with this option and there is still the risk of potential failure of some of these trees given their size, location and the susceptibility characteristics of this particular poplar species.

- (c) Undertake a staged tree removal and replacement planting programme.

- (b) Removal of the remaining eight poplar trees (identified on the western, northern & eastern boundaries) and the 12 miscellaneous trees (identified as eucalypts, robinias, birch, ash, cypress etc) in Ferrier Park, as a medium priority during the summer/autumn period 2005/06.
- (c) Prepare a detailed landscape plan and carry out consultation with the local community in regard to the replacement planting programme for the park. The replacement planting would be undertaken over the 2005/06 and 2006/07 financial years, but in the one planting season (i.e. the planting would be completed in the one operation during the autumn/winter of 2006).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Riccarton/Wigram Community Board approve option (c) as outlined in the section headed "Preferred Option".

CHAIRPERSON'S RECOMMENDATION

That the staff's recommendation be adopted.