

## 8. ERNLE CLARK RESERVE – RESERVE EXTENSION AND ADJACENT RIVERBANK WALKWAY

<b>General Manager responsible:</b>	General Manager City Environment Group, DDI 941-8608
<b>Officer responsible:</b>	Unit Manager Transport & Greenspace
<b>Author:</b>	Angela Abel, Consultation Leader Greenspace, DDI 941-5112

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is for the Spreydon/Heathcote Community Board to approve the final landscape plan LP324802 (refer **Attachment 1**) for Ernle Clark Reserve, Reserve Extension and Adjacent Riverbank Walkway prior to detailed design and an application being made for funding in the 2012 Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP).

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Ernle Clark Reserve and walkway runs adjacent to the south bank of the Heathcote River between Barrington Street and Erle Terrace. It can also be accessed beside Thorrrington Playground on Thorrrington Road. It is frequently used by pedestrians/cyclists/dog walkers.
3. In 2009 Council purchased a portion of land that provides an extension to the existing Ernle Clark Reserve and river corridor walkway. This piece of land has numerous established trees and plantings, with a waterway running through it.
4. The Reserve provides a unique experience offering diverse character and many different plant collections.
5. A volunteer group called the "Ernle Neighbourhood Group" have been in operation for approximately two years and meet on the last Saturday of every month to carry out weeding in the Reserve.
6. Situated on the Heathcote River Floodplain, Ernle Clark Reserve and its well-used walking track can become very wet and boggy, making tracks hard to use during winter months especially.
7. Other known issues within the Reserve include weed control, lack of directional signage, perceived safety and entrance definition.

### FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8. The Council does not currently have funding to undertake the work proposed in this draft plan. An application will be made to the LTCCP in 2012 for funding to be allocated for new development and ongoing maintenance. If the application is successful it will enable proposed work to be staged.
9. \$30,000 funding has been allocated for track works in the 2010/11 financial year. This funding will allow the worst affected areas of track to be addressed earlier. This funding sits under Neighbourhood Parks.

### Do the Recommendations of this Report Align with 2009-19 LTCCP budgets?

10. Yes.

### LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

11. All necessary Resource Consents and Building Consents will be obtained before any construction is undertaken.
12. All work will be carried out by a Council approved contractor with the appropriate health and safety and work site management controls in place.

**Have you considered the legal implications of the issue under consideration?**

13. Yes.

**ALIGNMENT WITH LTCCP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS**

**LTCCP 2009-19**

**14. Parks, Open Spaces and Waterways – Page 118**

- (a) Provide a network of safe, accessible and attractive neighbourhood parks in order to:
- Encourage community interaction
  - Provide places for childrens play
  - strengthen Christchurch's identity as the Garden City
  - protect and enhance the regions heritage
  - protect and enhance exotic and native biodiversity, and waterways
  - ensure that park design, development and maintenance is sustainable and timely.

**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIES**

**15. Safer Christchurch Strategy**

This strategy aligns injury prevention, road safety and crime prevention under the overarching aim of Christchurch becoming the safest city in New Zealand. One of the goals of this strategy is to enhance safety from crime through preventative and supportive actions, such as:

- (a) Ensure the phased adoption of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Principles (CPTED) into city-wide planning and policy;
- (b) To promote CPTED principles for application by owners and occupiers of existing buildings and spaces;
- (c) Provide active support to locally led initiatives that make significant contributions to reducing the incidence and effect of crime.

**16. Parks and Waterways Access Policy**

Improved access to parks and open space will increase equity as promoted by the City Council Policy on Equity and Access for People with Disabilities. Additionally, improved access has the potential to increase park use by enhancing comfort and convenience for all users and providing significant safety benefits.

**Do the recommendations align with the Council's strategies?**

17. Yes.

**CONSULTATION FULFILMENT**

18. In December 2009 an informal drop in session was held following the purchase of the extension to the Reserve. The drop in session gave the community an opportunity to provide the Council their issues, concerns and ideas prior to a draft development plan being prepared. The session was well attended and an excellent amount of feedback was received, a consultation plan was drafted based on feedback received and other known issues.

19. The formal consultation took place in April 2010. A Public Information Leaflet was sent to 391 properties in the vicinity of the Reserve and a number of other interest groups and key stakeholders. This leaflet included a summary of the concept, an initial draft plan and feedback form (refer **Attachment 2**). The project team sought feedback from the community to see whether the proposal was supported and asked for any comments. The proposal was also posted on the CCC Have Your Say website.
20. Ninety one (24%) responses were received. The responses received were predominantly positive:
  - (a) 39 said 'Yes';
  - (b) 32 had 'Mixed views';
  - (c) five said 'No';
  - (d) 17 had not indicated a response, the majority of these submissions were received via email where they are not asked to specifically indicate a preference.
21. Each submitter received an interim reply letter, which acknowledged that the submission had been received and that it would be considered, once the consultation period had closed. Submitters were also advised that they would receive further correspondence prior to a decision being made. This would outline the outcome of the consultation, the projects teams preferred concept plan, the decision making process and how they can be involved in this, and the expected timeline for the project.
22. This project has received a very exciting response rate which indicates the interest and enthusiasm out in the community. Consultation Leaders also received a number of calls and attended many appointments with interested parties with respect to their feedback.
23. The following objectives were used when developing the concept plan:
  - (a) To inform the community about budgeted work in the current Annual Plan;
  - (b) To consider the needs of the local community and the constraints of the available funds;
  - (c) To acquire a local perspective on the value of the Reserve to the neighbourhood;
  - (d) To provide an opportunity for local input and development of a sense of ownership of the Reserve;
  - (e) To increase public awareness of the Reserve;
  - (f) Assist the provision of a safe and clean Reserve;
  - (h) Provide a safe and accessible tracks within Reserve;
  - (i) Consider the visual effects of the planting on the adjoining properties;
  - (j) Assess the current status of trees within the Reserve and remove/prune as necessary;
  - (k) Consider landscape work in relation to safety;
  - (l) Formally complete the road stopping process at Ernlea Terrace end;
  - (m) Formalise volunteer agreement between CCC and Ernle Clark Work Group.

24. The main issues raised during the consultation were:

(a) **Signage:** 14 comments

Requests for signs to reflect history, reasons and purpose. That the track should be reflected as a shared use track, with dogs on leads, no motorised vehicles and that the Volunteer Group be acknowledged.

**Project team responses**

Interpretation signage will be included to reflect the history of the Reserve. Reserve entranceway signs and directional bollards will be installed as funding is approved in the LTCCP. Dogs are permitted in the Reserve as long as they are on a leash. New dog bylaw signage is currently under production. The track will be upgraded as a shared use track. As part of the proposed agreement with the Volunteer group formal recognition could take place.

(b) **Volunteer Group:** eight comments - six supporting, two not in support

Suggestions that the group should be formalised, recognised and better supported. Comments wanting the planting to stop and very clear guidelines and management to be implemented by Christchurch City Council.

**Project team responses**

The group has been asked to refrain from planting and weed only until the Board has approved the draft plan. A formalised agreement will be set up once this plan is approved by the Community Board.

(c) **Seating and picnic tables:** eight comments - seven supporting, one not in support

Request to move one seat and suggestions for more.

**Project Team Responses**

This area already provides significant amount of seating. The current situation makes available seven seats and one picnic table. The seat in the open area will be relocated (in place of a new seat) and a new picnic table will be provided, totalling seven seats and two picnic tables. One seat will be realigned so adjoining properties are less affected.

(d) **Tracks:** 21 comments - 20 in support, one not in support

Requests to remove cyclists. Most in favour of boardwalks over muddy areas, some suggestions to raise surface instead. Customers enjoy the meandering feel and appreciate the widening suggested. Suggestions to act now to avoid 'desire lines' and trampling of plants.

**Project Team Responses**

Tracks will cater for shared use, sightlines will be clearer as a result of realignment of tracks. Raised surface tracks have not proven successful in such wet areas therefore sections of boardwalks will be constructed in the worst affected areas. Some funding has been allocated in 2010-11 financial year to undertake this work.

(e) **Bluebells and daffodils:** 10 comments supporting

Requests to underplant with bluebells and daffodils.

**Project Team Responses**

Exotic Woodland Plant Collections and Open Space Areas will be investigated for underplanting with bluebells and daffodils in appropriate locations.

(f) **Natives:** 34 comments - 22 in support, 12 not in support

Sixteen specific requests to plant more natives and/or gradual replacement of exotics. Six mentioned food for birds/insects and/or corridor to the Port Hills. Five suggested planting natives on Morris Land (privately owned fenced off area on Thornington Road).

### **Project Team Responses**

The Morris Land has not been considered by the project team as it is out of the scope of this project. The proposed native areas (yellow) add to the overall balance of native/exotic planting in the area and continue the bird corridor down from the Port Hills. Gradual replacement of the large exotic trees will take place in these (yellow) areas over time (they will be removed as they become a health and safety risk or reach the end of their life). The red areas will now be an exotic woodland mixed with selected native trees and low (approximately 0.6 metres) native and exotic underplanting collection.

- g) **Exotics:** 36 comments: 31 supporting, five not in support.  
Comments that the plan is seen as having natives all along the river. Twenty five want to keep big exotic trees and/or not replace them. Seven said too much native or prefer no native underplanting. Four wanted clear trunks and/or views to the river.

### **Project Team Responses**

The "Enhancement of existing Exotic Woodland areas mixed with low native underplanting" (red areas) will retain the large exotic trees and include some large native trees included with low mixed underplanting with an approximate height of 0.6 metres. The exotic area to the south of the Studholme Street bridge has been extended down to the river.

- h) **Preserve wilderness/good compromise of planting:** 11 comments supporting  
Six comments indicating the existing wilderness feel is appreciated and should be retained, five specific comments stating they felt it was a great compromise of native and exotic planting.

### **Project Team Responses**

These comments support the draft plan and suggest that we are providing a balance and preserving the feel that our customers love about Ernle.

- i) **Safety and views:** 16 comments  
Suggestions that the current planting of natives is too dense and confining in some areas and customers would prefer clear sightlines, views of trunks and views to the river. Confined areas have been inviting to some undesirable behaviours.

### **Project Team Responses**

Views and sightlines will change as plants grow but safety is always important and considered. Whilst there are areas of more dense planting it is certainly kept to a minimum. The plan has been amended to highlight that under planting collections will be approximately 0.6 metres, which are lower than the expectations indicate and will require

- j) **Legal Road:** two comments  
A separate Board report will be submitted requesting this change.
- k) **Extending the boundaries:** five comments  
Comments suggesting boundaries should be extended to include an entrance in Nutfield Lane, incorporating the road Reserve and extending past Colombo Street. These areas are currently outside the boundaries of the Reserve but the project team will investigate these suggestions.
- l) **Additional bridge/jetty:** two comments  
Suggestions for another bridge and a jetty.  
There isn't room in the river to cater for a jetty and another bridge would incur extreme costs which the Council cannot justify.

- m) **Maintenance:** 10 comments  
Issues specifically with maintenance and removal of known weeds. Suggestions that we cannot wait until funding allocated for maintenance.

Project team response

Maintenance will continue regardless of the LTCCP funding as Ernle Clark Reserve is a Council asset to look after.

- n) **Rope swings:** two comments  
All play equipment needs to comply with NZ playground standards. The entire Reserve has many natural play elements and Thorrington Playground is nearby which is the Council designated play area. Attaching ropes is detrimental to the health of trees.

25. Overall the feedback received was very supportive, it was fantastic to get such a lot of feedback and meet so many people who are passionate about the Reserve.
26. Following the feedback received the following changes have been made to the final plan:
- (a) The seat in the open area will be relocated (in place of a new seat) and a new picnic table will be provided, totalling seven seats and two picnic tables. One seat will be realigned so adjoining properties are less affected;
  - (b) The “Enhancement of existing Exotic Woodland Plant Collections” (green areas) and “Open Space Areas” (purple areas) will be investigated for underplanting with bluebells and daffodils in appropriate locations;
  - (c) The “Enhancement of existing Exotic Woodland areas mixed with low native underplanting” (red areas) will retain the large exotic trees and include some large native trees included with low mixed underplanting with an approximate height of 0.6 metres;
  - (d) The “Enhancement of existing Exotic Woodland Plant Collections” (green areas) will be amended to include some low exotic underplanting with an approximate height of 0.6 metres;
  - (e) The exotic area to the south of the Studholme Street bridge has been extended down to the river;
  - (f) An indicative plant list has been included (refer **Attachment 3**) this includes a breakdown of the plant collections and the area they occupy:
    - (i) 27%: Enhancement of existing exotic woodland with some low (approx. 0.6 metres) exotic under planting collection.
    - (ii) 25%: Enhancement of existing native tree and shrub plant collection.
    - (iii) 31%: Enhancement of existing exotic woodland mixed with selected native trees and low (approx 0.6 metres) native and exotic underplanting.
    - (iv) 1%: Enhancement of existing and proposed native riparian plant collection.
    - (v) 7%: Enhancement of existing semi-formal herbaceous plant collection.
    - (vi) 8 : Retain existing open space;
  - (g) The indicative plant list also includes a statement to make it clear that trees will not be removed unless there is a health and safety reason or they have reached the end of their life;

- (h) The Council will set up formalised agreements with groups who volunteer within Council owned parks and reserves. As part of this a specific agreement will be put in place with the Ernle Neighbourhood Group.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Spreydon/Heathcote Community Board approve the final plan LP324802 (**Attachment 1**) for Ernle Clark Reserve - Reserve Extension and Adjacent Riverbank Walkway and to proceed to detailed design and an application for allocation of funding in LTCCP 2012.

**CHAIRPERSONS RECOMMENDATION**

For discussion.