

5. QUARRY HILL RESERVE PLAYGROUND DEVELOPMENT

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Committee's recommendation to the Board of the concept plan for the development of a playground at Quarry Hill Reserve following consultation with the local community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Board members will recall that the proposed concept plan for the development of a playground in Quarry Hill Reserve was presented to a Board seminar on 13 March 2012 prior to staff carrying out further consultation with the local community. The proposed concept plan was based on feedback gathered from the community over the summer period.
3. The public information leaflet was distributed to approximately 240 households and absentee property owners in the vicinity of the reserve, and identified stakeholder groups, during April 2012. A total of 27 comment forms were returned by the community with 20 of these clearly indicating their support for the proposed concept plan. A letter of petition with 21 signatories opposing the plan was also received after the consultation period had closed. Further details are provided under the consultation fulfilment section of this report.
4. In recognition of this feedback and further technical advice, staff propose to make some minor changes to the original proposal (refer **Attachment 1**). The amendments proposed by staff are:
 - (a) The swing set is upgraded from a two-bay to a three-bay size;
 - (b) The "Spica" spinner is upgraded to a "Fantail" spinner that can accommodate four children;
 - (c) An additional item of play equipment, a "Horse" rocker, is provided for very young children;
 - (d) The artificial climbing boulder has a scramble net attached.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5. Funding for this proposed playground is provided within the 2009-19 LTP New Assets, Neighbourhood Parks, Playgrounds and Recreational Facilities Programme as shown below:
 - (a) 2011/12 - \$9,000 - Design and consultation;
 - (b) 2012/13 - \$5,000 - Design and consultation.
6. Funding for the construction of the playground is currently deferred. New funding will be sought under the 2013 LTP.

Do the Recommendations of this report align with 2009-19 LTP budgets?

7. Yes, as above.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

8. No building or resource consent issues have been identified. No other legal issues have been identified.

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

9. Yes, as above.

ALIGNMENT WITH LTCCP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS

10. The project aligns with the Long Term Plan 2009-2019: Community Outcomes – A city for Recreation, Fun and Creativity; A Healthy City.

Parks, open spaces and waterways

- (a) Safety – by ensuring that our Parks, open spaces and waterways are healthy and safe places;
- (b) Community – By providing spaces for communities to gather and interact;
- (c) Environment – By enabling people to contribute to projects that improve our environment;
- (d) Governance – By involving people in decision-making about parks, open spaces and waterways;
- (e) Health – By providing areas for people to engage in healthy activities;
- (f) Recreation – By offering a range of recreational opportunities in parks, open spaces and waterways;
- (g) City Development - By providing an inviting, pleasant and well cared-for environment.

Measures

- (h) Neighbourhood parks are satisfactorily maintained;
- (i) Customers are satisfied with the range of recreation facilities, including playgrounds.

Do the recommendations of this report support a level of service or project in the 2009-19 LTCCP?

11. Yes, as above.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIES

12. The project has primary alignment with the following Council strategies and policies:

- (a) Safer Christchurch Strategy;
- (b) Parks and Waterways Access Policy;
- (c) Environmental Policy Statement;
- (d) Children's Play Equipment on Parks Policy;
- (e) Children's Policy;
- (f) Physical Recreation and Sport Strategy.

Do the recommendations align with the Council's strategies?

13. Yes, as above.

CONSULTATION FULFILMENT

14. During December 2011 and January 2012 an initial issues survey was undertaken of approximately 200 households closest to Quarry Hill Reserve. Residents were asked what the reserve was currently being used for, their views on how the reserve should be developed and what play or recreational facilities would they like to see there. A total of 22 responses were received.

15. The most common activities observed by residents taking place in the reserve were informal cricket games with other ball games and residential events also being popular. Some form of playground, preferably with a 'natural look', was the most popular development proposal identified by respondents with a tennis court also being a popular choice. Based on this feedback, a concept plan for a playground development with a low-key naturalistic look was produced.
16. Further public consultation was then undertaken with the local community on the proposed playground development concept plan in April/May 2012. The public information leaflet was distributed to approximately 240 households and absentee property owners in the vicinity of the reserve, along with two identified stakeholder groups. The plan was also available from local libraries and service centres and the Councils 'Have Your Say' website.
17. Overall we received a positive response from the community with a total of 27 comment forms being returned. Of these, 20 respondents clearly indicated their support for the plan, six clearly indicated their opposition to the plan and/or indicated they had mixed views. Many respondents also provided additional feedback on a variety of issues. A letter of petition with 21 signatories opposing the plan was then received after the consultation period had closed. Further details are provided under the background issues" section of this report.

Support for proposal	Yes	No	Mixed views	Total
Number of responses	20	6	1	27
Percentage (%)	74	22	4	100%

18. During May 2012, staff received six more comment forms from the initial December/January consultation period that had been receipted on 1 February 2012 but had been lost in the mail delivery system. However the feedback provided in these forms was largely consistent with that of earlier respondents and would not have led staff to make any changes to the concept plan design that was released for consultation in April 2012.
19. All respondents who provided contact details have been sent a final letter of reply thanking them for their input and providing responses to issues raised. The letter also informed respondents that the final amended plan would be presented to the Riccarton/Wigram Community Board for their approval. Details of the meeting were provided so that any interested people could request speaking rights or attend.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board:

- (a) Approve the concept plan (refer **Attachment 1**) for the development of a playground at Quarry Hill Reserve noting that it takes into account consultation with the local community.
- (b) Note that there is currently no funding for this playground. Funding will be requested as part of the 13/21 Long Term Plan.

BACKGROUND (THE ISSUES)

Background

20. The reserve was acquired by the Council in 2009 as part of the Quarry Hill subdivision at the top of Kennedys Bush Road. It is currently grassed and contains no facilities other than a pedestrian path. The neighbourhood is relatively isolated and there are no playground or other recreation facilities in the vicinity.

Issues raised in public consultation

Support for proposal

21. A total of 20 respondents (74 per cent) who returned comment forms expressed their support for the proposed concept plan with many making additional comments including that the plan was a good design, it would suit a range of ages or they like specific elements such as the climbing rock or the retention of an open grassed area.

Opposition to the proposal

22. A total of six respondents (22 per cent) who returned comment forms clearly indicated their opposition to the proposed plan, however two of these were not related to the plan itself. One respondent believed that the project should be deferred and expenditure directed towards rebuilding essential services. Another appears to have provided feedback on Halswell Quarry Park instead of Quarry Hill Reserve. The remaining four respondents were opposed to the proposed concept design for various reasons including:
 - (a) The playground design is too basic, and does not provide enough play equipment and activities for children;
 - (b) The design does not reflect the socio-economic status of the area;
 - (c) The provision of a playground, and/or the design of this playground, does not cater to the demographics of the area;
 - (d) A tennis court would be preferred instead of, or as well as, a playground.
23. A letter of petition was also received after the closing of the consultation period expressing dissatisfaction with the proposed plan. The letter has 21 signatories from 18 households, five of whom can be identified as having also made a written submission (four opposed to and one in support of the proposed plan). The signatories believe that the project is under-budgeted, lacks ideas, does not provide much equipment for recreation and ignores the nature of the neighbourhood. The letter also asked about the project funding, why other plans are not shown, why the reserve is so poorly equipped and why the Council cannot invest into playgrounds comparable to those in other areas in Christchurch. The signatories believe more effort and resources should be dedicated to this development and that it should reflect the socio-economic nature of the area.

Mixed views

24. One submitter indicated support for some aspects of the proposal but not for others. While acknowledging that a playground would be good for younger children, they felt that a tennis court would be better used by the predominant age group of children in the area which they identified as 10-16 years. They thought that a tennis court and a basketball hoop would be good for all ages.

Playground design and equipment

25. The scale, design and budget for playgrounds is determined by the type and location of the park and its level of use. For example, Spencer Park and New Brighton Beach Park are examples of metropolitan or destination parks that cater for large numbers of visitors and accordingly have large scale playgrounds. The design of the Quarry Hill Reserve playground, and the range of play equipment provided, is at the appropriate level for a small neighbourhood

park and is consistent with playgrounds in other neighbourhood parks of this nature across the city.

26. For a neighbourhood park development of this scale project team staff would utilise their professional technical expertise, in conjunction with analysis of community feedback, to prepare one concept design plan that meets the project objectives, community aspirations, technical specifications and allocated budgets. It would not be expected that more than one option or concept plan would be presented for a park development of this size, particularly as concept plans are costly to prepare.
27. Within this context, the playground needs to provide for smaller numbers of users with a wide range of ages and abilities. The play equipment also needs to provide a variety of different activities that develop different motor skills and provide opportunities for individual, parallel and co-operative play amongst children. The proposed play equipment is of a modern and current design that meets these requirements, enabling the park to provide increased play value through a range of play experiences.
28. In response to feedback received, a "Horse" rocker has been added to provide another play activity for very young children and the swings have been upgraded to a three-bay set. Similarly the spinner has been upgraded to a "Fantail" model that also provides for four children at the same time.
29. A total of three respondents particularly liked the proposed artificial climbing boulder but another asked if natural rock could be used as play equipment instead. An artificial climbing boulder is not of a random shape like a natural boulder. It has the advantage of being custom-designed and built to whatever specifications are desired. The surface can have hand/toe holds and other features, of various sizes, to cater for a large range of abilities and climbing styles. There are also options to include cubby holes, tunnels, overhangs and scramble nets, along with elements, resembling for example fossils or invertebrates, embedded in the rock. It is this unique flexibility and variety that enables the boulder to provide the graduated play challenges that are essential to retaining children's interest as their abilities and skill levels improve. It also provides opportunities for tactile, imaginative and investigative play. The proposed artificial rock will be custom-designed and will include an attached scramble net.
30. There are significant technical difficulties involved in relocating and anchoring a natural rock of a similar scale and the opportunities for climbing and other play activities may be limited by the random nature of the rock itself. The proposed concept design does provide opportunities for natural play using the natural rocks that are part of the landscaping. In particular the smaller scale rocks on either side of the slide, which uses the natural contour of the site, can also be used for scrambling and climbing.
31. In this particular project, feedback from residents over the summer period indicated they also wished to see a playground that is naturalistic and low key in keeping with the surrounding hill environment and not visually intrusive. Hence the playground has a setting of natural rock and low native plantings that is kept to a low height to protect the views for neighbouring residents and is in keeping with the surrounding hillside environment. The size and position of the playground also allows the open grassed area in the reserve to be retained for informal recreation activities such as ball games and events.
32. The letter of petition noted that it does not seem that the park will provide much equipment for recreation after quoting from literature that identified residents in this type of neighbourhood highly valued parks for exercise and fitness opportunities and use parks for recreation.

Recreation comprises more than activities undertaken on play or other sporting and fitness equipment. The provision of open space is equally important for exercise, fitness and other recreation opportunities, for example running, informal sport and games and family or community gatherings.

Tennis courts

33. Five respondents, including those for and against the proposed playground concept plan itself, made various comments about the possible provision of a tennis court. Four respondents wanted to see a tennis court as well as, or instead of, a playground for different reasons including that a tennis court would be used by more of the community, or by the predominant age group in the area, or because of the high rates paid by residents. There are differing

interpretations amongst respondents of the demographics of the neighbourhood covering a range from no children at all through to lots of young children or mostly 10-16 year olds. As this immediate area was not widely developed at the time of Census 2006, demographic information is limited and may not be accurate. However, one respondent did not want to see a tennis court provided as they like the idea of playing cricket and softball in the reserve. Overall, the feedback in the second consultation did not provide any further clear direction on the provision of a tennis court.

34. A tennis court in addition to the playground has not been proposed by staff for two key reasons:
 - (a) The provision of both of these recreational facilities within the same park is outside the scope and budget for a small neighbourhood park of this type;
 - (b) The reserve has insufficient space for installation of both a playground and a tennis court.
35. The public information leaflet also contained a further explanation of why a playground had been proposed instead of, or in preference to, a tennis court for the development of the reserve:
 - (a) The initial issues consultation over the summer period showed an overall preference for a playground amongst those who responded;
 - (b) The only suitable location for a tennis court would be in the centre of the reserve in the same location as the existing informal cricket pitch (that has been mown into the grass by local residents themselves). This is the only flat area in the reserve large enough for ball games and as such it can be used for other informal sporting and community activities. If a tennis court was built, it would occupy the only flat play space of any reasonable size in reserve, preventing informal use of the reserve for cricket and other ball games and limit its use for other community activities;
 - (c) A tennis court is required to be enclosed by three metre high fencing which would, along with the large area of hard paving, impact on visual amenity and on the views from the reserve and for neighbouring houses;
 - (d) A playground can also be used by many people at the same time, of differing ages and abilities, and without the need for sporting equipment, whereas a tennis court is used by a maximum of four players at any one time who need to bring their own equipment.

Additional features suggested

36. A number of submitters suggested the provision of additional features which staff have responded to as follows:
 - (a) Drinking fountains and taps are not generally installed in neighbourhood reserves as most users would be expected to come from nearby houses with access to water, and walkers in an area such as this would be expected to carry their own supplies. The cost of installing drinking-water equipment and associated water supply services is also high;
 - (b) Additional features such as a flying fox, concrete circuit footpath for bikes, basketball hoop and native shrub/tree plantings are outside of the scope and budget of this project at this time. The reserve is also too small to accommodate additional features that require a large amount of space, such as a flying fox.

Other issues outside of the project area

37. Some respondents raised issues that were outside the physical area covered by this project, such as Halswell Quarry Park and street trees, which have been referred to the appropriate staff within the Council for investigation.