

## 1. FORMER CARETAKER'S RESIDENCE AND GROUNDS, BROMLEY CEMETERY – 128 KEIGHLEYS ROAD

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The purpose of this report is for the Council to consider the future of the former caretaker's house and outbuildings within the Bromley Cemetery.

### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Bromley Cemetery is zoned Conservation 4 (Cemeteries) under the proposed City Plan, and as such is a listed historic cemetery. Under the proposed City Plan it is permanently recognised "as a peaceful and undisturbed environment for commemorating early settlement and subsequent occupation".

The former caretaker's dwelling is situated inside the Bromley Cemetery near the corner of Keighleys Road and Linwood Avenue, having direct vehicular access from Keighleys Road, (refer attached plan). The property is held as fee simple land by the Council under Certificate of Title CB415/106 described as Lot 1 DP 8825.

The dwelling had a resident caretaker living in it up until the mid 1980's after which a change in management policy saw the discontinuation of this service. Latterly, the Council has used the property for short-term rental accommodation. The present tenant is responsible for opening and shutting the cemetery gateway in close proximity to the dwelling.

The dwelling is at least 70 years old, consisting of a weatherboard exterior and an iron roof. While the exterior is in a reasonably sound condition, substantial external repainting is required.

The interior of the dwelling has been well maintained but the two outbuildings are in a state of disrepair and require demolition.

If the dwelling and outbuildings are demolished the additional area made available could be integrated into the cemetery to provide further burial space. A number of the city's cemeteries are close to full capacity and this proposal would provide much needed extra space. It is proposed that the area would provide a combination of full sized burial plots, ashes plots and children's plots. The memorial to stillborn babies is located at Bromley Cemetery and it would, therefore, seem appropriate to develop a new children's section within this additional area. This would provide an opportunity to create a design for a children's section that could accommodate the decoration and planting that many parents wish to have on their children's graves.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The former caretaker's house at the Bromley Cemetery is in a fair condition, currently occupied but requiring ongoing maintenance costs. A decision is required to determine the future of this building. If the dwelling and outbuildings were demolished it is considered that the bare site (approximately 2000m<sup>2</sup> after landscaping) could be integrated into the main cemetery to provide additional burial space which could include a children's section and ashes plots. There is an important need for burial space in the Christchurch metropolitan area and this cemetery is full, apart from space for a few second interments. Extra space would therefore be desirable. Making available the building for community purposes would be considered an inappropriate option, given its condition, location and the difficulty of regular vehicle access from Linwood Avenue through the present entranceway.

### RELEVANT POLICY

The proposal is consistent with the Council's Cemeteries Enhancement Programme for years 2000 to 2005 for Bromley Cemetery, which states:

*"Consider development of area occupied by sexton's house for additional full plots and ashes interment area."*

### LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no legal impediments to demolishing the dwelling and landscaping the site. The house is not a listed heritage item and therefore no resource consent for demolition or landscaping is required.

## FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Greenspace Unit has regularly overseen the maintenance of the dwelling, which is in a sound structural state, to ensure any occupants are provided with adequate living accommodation. In the 2002-2003 financial year City Care were instructed to undertake a total structural pre-check, replace deteriorated weatherboards, seal replacement components, and resecure any loose fitting window sashes and frames up to a total capped amount of \$4,500. This work was subsequently carried out to a good standard of workmanship.

On the basis of replacement cost, less depreciation and obsolescence, the Council's current net book value of the dwelling is \$6,514.38. This book value anticipates a "residual life" for the dwelling of a maximum of five (5) years. The fences are in a poor state of repair, and are at the end of their life, and therefore considered to have no value. Whilst there will be a minor loss in revenue from demolishing the dwelling there will be community benefits in providing more space for ash and full burial plots.

It is anticipated that the cost to the Council of having the dwelling demolished and the site cleared will be in the range of \$7,500-\$14,000, which can be accommodated within the Greenspace Unit's operating budget for 2004/2005.

## CONCLUSION

It is considered that the demolition of the building and clearing of the site is warranted given the obsolescence of the dwelling on the site, the low net book value of the dwelling, the high cost of maintaining the asset, and more importantly, the large number of burial/and or ash plots that will be made available if the site is cleared and landscaped. A separate arrangement can be facilitated with a security firm for cemetery gate opening and closing. If the Council decides that the dwelling should be retained and the Greenspace Manager authorises the implementation of a landscape plan for the site, this will require a separate building to secure past burial register records of a historical significance that may be viewed by members of the public, with viewing hours during the hours in which the cemetery is normally open.

## COMMUNITY BOARD CONSIDERATION

This proposal was considered by the Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board at its meeting on 7 July 2004. The Board **decided** to recommend to the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee:

1. That the house be retained and upgraded on the site.
2. That the Council negotiate with City Care for an appropriately skilled person to be appointed to maintain the cemetery and adjacent cemeteries.
3. That staff be requested to investigate the possibility of erecting a building at the cemetery for storing the cemetery register (enabling the register to be freely available for public viewing).

### Committee

**Recommendation:** That the house be retained and upgraded for future use in the cemetery.

(Note: Councillor Chrissie Williams requested that her vote against the recommendation be recorded.)

## SUBSEQUENT INFORMATION AS REQUESTED BY THE COMMITTEE

Additional information relating to the financial implications of retention or demolition has been obtained.

There are three options available:

- Option 1.** Demolition of the house and re-utilisation of the land for burial purposes.
- Option 2.** Retention of the house and continuation of the current rental tenancy.
- Option 3.** Retention of the house and redevelopment as a records viewing facility with a resident caretaker.

**Option 1 – House Demolition and Re-use for Burial Purposes**

This option would involve the removal of the existing house and outbuildings and clearing the site to enable it to be used for additional burial plots. Redevelopment of the site would include landscape treatment and it has been suggested that a portion of the area could be developed as a Children’s section with a design that allows for planting and ornamentation. From a financial perspective it is estimated that this proposal would generate plot sales revenue of \$183,250 over a 20 year period.

**Option 2 – Retention of the House for Rental**

This option presents the status quo and involves retaining the house, undertaking required maintenance and continuing to rent the dwelling. The current tenant provides gate keeping services at the Cemetery and receives a contract payment for this work. At the present time the dwelling is in a relatively sound structural state having been pre-checked in 2002 and all known deteriorated components replaced, and primed. The entire exterior of the dwelling is currently in need of a painting.

**Option 3 – Retain the House and Redevelop as a Records Viewing Facility**

No firm proposals for this option have been investigated and it would require concepts to be developed and cost estimates prepared. If the house is retained this could be considered as a future option and a separate report would need to be prepared at the appropriate time. It is, however, likely to involve substantial costs and these would need to be weighed against the benefits of this option.

Set out below is the cost comparisons of Options 1 and 2. Costs for Option 3, a Cemetery Records Reviewing Facility cannot be determined at present and would be the subject of an additional report. The costs/revenues/savings presented are based on a 20 year period (expected life of the Cemetery) and are assessed at present day costs.

<b>Option 1 - House Demolition</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>Option 2 – Retaining the House (Status Quo)</b>	<b>\$</b>
<b>Costs</b>		<b>Costs</b>	
Dwelling write off	6,514	House insurance	4,250
Loss of rental return	176,800	House maintenance	88,000
House demolition & site restoration	10,700	Depreciation	2,605
Landscape treatment	10,000	Gate keeping services (Tenant)	57,200
Grounds maintenance	17,400		
Gate keeping services (Contractor)	23,100		
<b>Revenue/savings</b>		<b>Revenue/savings</b>	
House insurance	(4,250)	House rental	(176,800)
House maintenance	(48,000)		
Depreciation	(2,605)		
Burial plot fees	(183,250)		
<b>Net Cost</b>	<b>6,409</b>	<b>Net Cost</b>	<b>(24,745)</b>

**CONCLUSION IN RESPECT TO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The figures above indicate that, from a financial perspective, the best option is to retain the house. However, this needs to be considered in the context of providing additional burial capacity at a time when this is diminishing throughout the city. To date, there has not been the opportunity to explore ideas around alternative uses for the house that may complement the historic aspects of the cemetery.