

8. BROWNLEE RESERVE – PROPOSED PLAYGROUND UPGRADE

General Manager responsible:	General Manager, City Environment Group, DDI 941 8608
Officer responsible:	Unit Manager, Transport and Greenspace
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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board's approval of the concept plan for the upgrade of the playground at Brownlee Reserve following consultation with the local community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Board members will recall that the proposed concept plan for the upgrade of the playground at Brownlee Reserve was presented to a Board seminar on 18 July 2012 prior to staff carrying out further consultation with the local community.
3. The public information leaflet was distributed during August-September 2012 to approximately 765 households and absentee owners in the vicinity of the reserve and other identified stakeholder groups. A total of 52 comment forms were returned by the community. Overall we received a very positive response from the community with 46 of these clearly identifying their support for the proposed concept plan. Further details are provided under the Consultation Fulfilment section (paragraphs 14 and 15) 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 flying fox has been re-oriented to allow for better use of the existing ground contours and to avoid further work on other trees, while keeping clear of the damp swale area. This also enables flying fox users to face the ocean views rather than looking over fenced private properties.
 - (b) The swale area will be planted with low-growing plant species that are tolerant of wetter soil conditions to deter foot traffic through this damp area, and across the path of the flying fox.
 - (c) The Fantail spinner has been moved because of the realignment of the flying fox.
 - (d) The pathways have been realigned to accommodate the above changes and provide direct and easier access.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5. Funding for this proposed playground upgrade is provided within the 2009-19 LTP Renewals and Replacements, Neighbourhood Parks – Playgrounds and Recreation budget as shown below:

2012/13 - \$78,000, Design, consultation and construction.

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

6. Yes, as above.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

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

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

8. Yes, as above.

ALIGNMENT WITH LTP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS

9. 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.

Renewals and replacements

- (j) Play areas and equipment are renewed on an 8-70 year cycle.

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

10. Yes, as above.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIES

11. 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.

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12. The project aligns with the Brownlee Reserve Landscape Concept Plan approved by the Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board on 7 December 2006.

Do the recommendations align with the Council's strategies?

13. Yes, as above.

CONSULTATION FULFILMENT

14. The public information leaflet was distributed to approximately 765 households and absentee owners in the vicinity of the reserve, and other identified stakeholder groups, during August-September 2012. The leaflet was also available from local libraries, service centres and the Council's 'Have Your Say' website.

Overall we received a very positive response from the community with a total of 52 comment forms being returned. Of these, 46 clearly identified their support for the proposed concept plan, five clearly indicated their opposition to the plan and one did not specify a preference. Five were received after closing date but have been included in the analysis. Many respondents also provided additional feedback on a variety of issues. Further details are provided under the Background issues section (from paragraph 16) of this report.

Support for proposal	Yes	No	Not indicated	Total
Number of responses	46	5	1	52
Percentage (%)	88%	10%	2%	100%

15. 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 Hagley/Ferrymead 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 Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board approve the concept plan (**Attachment 1**) for the upgrade of the playground at Brownlee Reserve.

CHAIRPERSON'S RECOMMENDATION

That the staff recommendation be adopted.

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BACKGROUND (THE ISSUES)

16. The Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board approved a landscape development plan for Brownlee Reserve on 7 December 2006 after extensive public consultation over a two year period (refer **Attachment 2**). The plan provided for an extensive programme of works in the different areas of the reserve to be staged over a five year period, including:
 - (a) Removal and replacement of many trees.
 - (b) New landscape plantings and other landscaping work including seating.
 - (c) Upgrading of the playground.
 - (d) Upgrading of paths.
 - (e) Upgrading of park entrances including construction of retaining walls and pedestrian entrance steps on two road frontages.
17. Implementation of Stages one, two and four of this plan, along with most of the works in Stage three, had been completed by September 2010. Funding for further work was then deferred following the earthquake events, but is now available to complete Stage five of the development programme (Areas one and two). The landscaping works in Area one have already been approved under the 2006 landscape development plan and will be undertaken during this financial year. A concept plan was prepared for the upgrade of the children's playground in Area two for public consultation on the proposed design. The remaining works from Stage three (in Area four) are the upgrading of the lower Panorama Road pedestrian entrance and the construction of the retaining wall along the road frontage. These works are currently in the design phase and funding will be sought for construction under the LTP.

Issues raised in public consultation:

Support for proposal

18. A total of 46 respondents (88 per cent) who returned comment forms expressed their general support for the proposed concept plan, with many making additional positive comments such as that they were looking forward to the upgrade, or that they liked the playground design. Four of those who supported the playground concept plan also believed that it should be deferred at this time in favour of improving the paths within the reserve, or repairing roads and footpaths, or repairing the pool in Scarborough Park. One respondent did not indicate a preference but suggested additional features be provided.

Opposition to the proposal

19. A total of five respondents (10 per cent) who returned comment forms clearly indicated their opposition to the proposed plan for various reasons including:
 - (a) Funding should be used to upgrade other playgrounds on the Sumner flat as there are now few children in the area.
 - (b) Funding should be used to repair other quake-damaged facilities including the pool in Scarborough Park.
 - (c) A playground upgrade would be a waste of money and under-utilised.
 - (d) Spending ratepayer money on a playground would be a misuse of funds when earthquake-damaged roads, footpaths and water supplies require repair on Clifton Hill and in other suburbs.

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Playground issues

20. While the majority of respondents support the upgrade of the playground, others have expressed concern that the funding should be used for upgrading other playgrounds, or repairing other facilities, or that repair of infrastructure should be given priority. There are also differing interpretations amongst respondents of the current demographics of the neighbourhood, with some concerned that there are now few children living in the area, and others indicating they have children who will enjoy the facilities.
21. The last official census was undertaken in 2006, and there have been many changes in the Clifton Hill community as a result of the earthquake events, therefore accurate demographic information is not available. However there is now greater certainty over the status of the land in this area and the majority can now look forward to rebuilding their homes and their community. The playground upgrade is a positive contribution towards this process and can be expected to provide enjoyment for local children and also visiting grandchildren, over many years to come.
22. The upgrade of the Scarborough Park playground will be considered in the next LTP process in 2013. The repair of the adjoining Scarborough paddling pool is included in the Council's Facilities Rebuild Plan. The repair of infrastructure such as roads, footpaths, and water supplies, is being managed by the Stronger Christchurch Infrastructure Rebuild Team (SCIRT) and respondents have been directed to the SCIRT website for information on rebuild work schedules for their areas.
23. Funding for the renewal and replacement of recreation facilities such as playgrounds is provided for in the 2009-19 LTP. This project was one of many projects that were deferred following the September 2010 earthquake, but is now able to proceed. The playground needs to provide for children with a wide range of ages and abilities. It 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. This is further enhanced by the play and exercise opportunities of the more open grassed area of the reserve.

Other equipment and facilities requested

24. Many respondents suggested the provision of a wide range of additional equipment, facilities and activities within the playground or the wider reserve which have not been able to be incorporated into the concept plan. Additional sporting and recreational features such as a half basketball court, cricket net and pitch, football goals and pitch, rugby posts, tennis court, bike ramps and scramble track, skate bowl and fitness equipment are outside the scope and budget of the playground upgrade and the approved landscape development plan for the reserve. There is also limited open space suitable for these activities, especially those that require a large amount of space in the reserve.
25. 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 high. The cost of installing barbecues and associated services is also high and these are generally only installed in large regional or destination parks with high visitor numbers. Similarly, dog waste bin units have proven very expensive to install and particularly to service so have been trialled only in areas of very high use such a dog parks and some regional park/beach areas. Responsible dog owners should be encouraged to carry their own plastic bags and take their dog waste home for disposal.
26. Toilets are not generally provided in smaller neighbourhood parks regardless of whether there is a playground present. Most users of local neighbourhood parks would again be expected to come from nearby houses and the use of the park by walking groups is incidental. However the potential need to provide toilet facilities for this type of incidental activity has been forwarded on to the relevant units in Council for further investigation as part of future planning for walking and cycling networks throughout the city.

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Other issues raised in the reserve

27. Seven respondents raised concerns that the existing paths in the reserve, including the new paths that were built or upgraded as part of the earlier development works, have safety issues or are difficult to use. The key concerns identified were that the gradients were too steep and the surfacing materials were unstable and slippery underfoot or washed away by rain. Staff will re-investigate the gradient and surface materials on these paths and the need for re-grading and re-surfacing. In the case of the entrance and paths in Area 1, which are yet to be redone, staff believe that there is insufficient space to lessen the gradient, so will investigate the possibility of sealing this section and also of improving access for pushchairs. Another respondent noted that boulders in the reserve that children use for climbing had come loose in the earthquakes and this issue has been referred to the Transport and Greenspace Unit staff for investigation.
28. Three respondents raised various issues about the landscape planting which staff have responded to as follows:
 - (a) The tree and shrub plantings will eventually grow to a stage where some additional shelter from the wind is provided.
 - (b) Staff recognise that children may like to play hide and seek type activities in the shrub plantings, however, the tree and shrub plantings still need to be sufficiently open to maintain good sight lines and clear visibility into the playground in accordance with the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).
 - (c) The bank on the lower side of Panorama Road will have a retaining wall built (similar to that on Clifton Terrace frontage) and native shrub plantings above.
 - (d) The need for further planting along the zig-zag pathway within the reserve will be investigated.
29. One submitter has asked that the retaining wall is extended along the entire road frontage from Clifton Terrace along Panorama Road due to ongoing issues with subsidence of the bank causing blockage of storm-water drains. The large parcel of land on the corner of Clifton Terrace and Panorama Road is privately owned so is not part of the development works for Brownlee Reserve.

Community garden and orchard proposal

30. Three respondents have promoted the establishment of a community garden and orchard in Brownlee Reserve, identifying a location within Area four of the development plan and requesting that the concept plan be amended to incorporate this. A fourth has asked that the existing orchard remain. The location identified within Area four is an area clearly shown on the approved landscape development plan for the new retaining wall and native plantings. It is the understanding of staff that a number of fruit trees have been planted there without Council permission and this will be investigated further. Staff consider that this proposal is outside of the scope of the playground upgrade concept plan and the approved development plan and that Brownlee Reserve is not a suitable location for this activity. Staff have been in communication with supporters of this proposal over the last year and have offered to meet to identify more suitable sites for the group to utilise.

Other issues outside of the project area

31. Some respondents raised issues that were outside the physical area covered by this project, including safer road crossings to the reserve and requests for development of other parks. These issues have been referred to other teams within Council for investigation as appropriate.