

Consultation summary: Halswell Domain miniature railway and pond – new lease

Process

Public consultation on the proposed new lease was open from 16 December 2021 to 14 February 2022 on the Council website and Have Your Say page.

Approximately 35 stakeholder organisations were emailed.

Approximately 30 letters including a copy of the plan were delivered to adjacent residents and sent to absentee landowners to introduce the proposal and invite questions or feedback.

In addition, a Newsline article and social media coverage supported the consultation process, and three corflute signs advertising the consultation were erected within Halswell Domain.

A public drop-in information session was held on 19 January 2022 between 4:00pm and 5:30pm.

Feedback received

The drop-in information session on site between 4.00pm and 5.30pm on 19 January was attended by the public, including several local residents, and the CSMEE project manager. One resident from William Brittan Avenue, opposite the proposed rail track, raised concerns about other issues in this area of the Domain, but all those attending were strongly supportive of the proposal and the work being done by the CSMEE.

Social media feedback on both the Council and Halswell Community Group Facebook pages during the consultation period was very positive. For Council it was the most popular post for December, reaching more than 80,000 people with 837 likes 140 comments and 52 shares with most comments in support.

Over December 2021 and January 2022 the Halswell Community Hub group received 71 Likes and 18 comments, all positive.

Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu was approached early to discuss the proposal and seek feedback. A Ngāi Tahu representative advised they have no concerns to raise and did not wish to make a submission.

Of the 261 submissions received, 258 indicated support for the new lease proposal and three did not approve. 122 gave Halswell addresses, with the majority of the remainder from wider Christchurch suburbs. Two submitters living immediately across William Brittan Avenue from the miniature railway supported the proposal.

Two organisations provided feedback: The Halswell Residents' Association strongly supports the proposal noting that it was due to their efforts that the CSMEE originally established on the site. The Halswell Residents' Association requested more cycle parking. A submission from SPOKES highlighted the need for cycleway access and expansion.

Five submitters indicated they wish to speak to a hearings panel, three in full support, one in support with suggestion, and one in opposition.

Summary of supportive submissions

The overwhelmingly strong support for the proposal included 80 submitters who made no further comment. The remaining 179 in support expressed appreciation for the CSMEE's activities, self-resourcing and management of their space for use by the community.

More than a quarter commented on the value in extending the rail track, and there was specific support from 11 submitters for the proposal for a more structured use of the pond. The society

members provide a positive atmosphere in a suitable environment to attract all ages, especially families and young children, as noted by half the submitters. This affordable activity complements other domain uses and does not restrict other activities. Feedback also noted family groups make use of the CSMEE operation, and surrounding area, for other family activities such as birthday parties.

More than a quarter of submitters noted the CSMEE operation as real asset to the Halswell community, and nearly as many commented that the miniature trains are also an attraction for wider Christchurch and beyond. There were also a number of comments praising the education and experiential value of this outdoor engineering activity, and two submitters commented specifically in appreciation of the CSMEE's value to the disabled.

Summary of opposing submissions, and project team responses

Suggestions and concerns raised by 16 submitters in support of the new lease including vegetation and planting ideas. There were requests to ensure the track extension has adequate resourcing and facilities including public walking and cycle access to the wider domain.

Two of the three submissions opposing the proposal came from local residents, one of whom lives next to Halswell Domain. Both are concerned that the changes that have happened over time affect their quality of life as residents. They both consider the CSMEE operation is intrusive and noisy (especially the tooting from the trains). These two residents are concerned about the new track's proximity to houses and the footpath. The adjacent resident is also concerned about the loss of amenity from the change in outlook from their property, and they would like to see the track go deeper into the reserve instead of closer to William Brittan Drive.

The other resident indicating opposition to the proposal is from a nearby suburb. However, they stated in their submission that they support the lease if the proposal is amended to mitigate the impact on existing vegetation including mature trees, and plantings are only eco-sourced natives.

See table below for details and project team response to suggestions and concerns raised above.

| Submitter suggestions and concerns | Number of comments | Project team response |
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| Try and save the tī kōuka cabbage tree proposed to be removed eg. Council support /funding to relocate. | 2 | The tī kōuka cabbage tree can be shifted out of the path of the new track, this will be done as part of the proposal. Council arborist staff will oversee the shift. |
| Support qualified by strong concern about removal of 15m ² of trees, and request to amend the proposal to account for harm done to existing mature trees. | 1 | The landscape and vegetation value of the existing 15m ² of shrubs proposed to be removed is to be off-set and enhanced by proposed 35m ² of new planting close by. |
| New vegetation plantings should only be eco-sourced natives | 1 | Eco sourced native plantings will be used. |
| Trust CSMEE will carry out planning improvements as promised | 1 | If the new lease is approved, CSMEE will be required to carry out all proposed planting. |
| Ensure extension is attractively presented – expect sensible and creative planting to compensate for extra space taken up | 2 | The proposed track extension, including associated structures and public access/crossing points, will be required to be constructed in a presentable manner, consistent with the existing operation. |

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| | | There will be an overall -increase in planted area. |
| Protect wildlife on pond | 1 | Council's Ecologist advises that pond wildlife will not be effected by the proposal. |
| Don't obstruct the cycle way and allow for widening as use increases | 2 | The track extension won't affect the use of cycleway. There is space and scope for any future cycleway expansion. |
| Provide two sets of cycle parking - near the toilets and near the Halswell entrance to the railway | 1 | Cycle parking requirements will be considered as part of the consent applications CSMEE will be required to apply for. |
| Cycle access needed over the bridge | 1 | The proposed bridge will provide for pedestrian access only. Cycle access to and through the Domain is via the nearby Quarryman's Cycle Trail. |
| CCC need to place additional rubbish bins, or the placement of a big bin that CSMEE have locked access to dispose of additional rubbish, when they are operating. | 1 | Signage encourages all parks users to take home any rubbish. The need for provision of rubbish bins will continue to be monitored by Parks Advisors. |
| Need to provide for foot traffic on the rail bridge over the creek to continue to allow for access to wider area | 3 | The proposal provides for pedestrian access over the bridge. |
| Ensure there is public access to the pond outside specified CSMEE times | 2 | Public access to the pond will remain open to all, outside the three specified CSMEE pond activity times. |
| Need to increase the opening hours to justify the proposal | 1 | The CSMEE public train times are proposed to remain the same (typically Sunday's 1-4pm). The additional track loop is primarily for driver training and train testing, while the public can use the train on the other track loop. |
| Make the lease affordable or free to CSMEE | 2 | A lease will be consistent with Council's Sports Lease Charges Policy. |
| Opposing comments | | |
| Tracks operation are intrusive to the neighbourhood, noisy (trains constantly tooting) and too close to houses in William Brittan Drive | 2 | The model track, located in a Recreation Reserve, has operated successfully since 2003. CSMEE are obliged to operate within District Plan noise limits for the site, and it is understood the horn or other train noise does not breach the set limits. Despite being within noise limits, as a gesture of good will in 2021, CSMEE halved the amount of times they used the train horns (restricting the use of the horn to pedestrian crossing points and in the wooded area). It is noted the new lease proposal has |

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| | | received supportive submissions from adjacent landowners, including a resident living opposite the proposed new track. |
| Have already had outlook spoilt by increased activity in the reserve | 1 | Halswell Domain provides for activities with a primary purpose consistent with its status as Recreation Reserve, which includes the model railway. Much of Halswell Domain remains without structures and activity allowing for a variety of visitor experiences. A number of submitters stated that the train activity complements existing activities and provides a positive atmosphere. |
| Adjacent resident would support a proposal for the extension to go deeper into the domain | 1 | A range of track extensions and alignment routes were considered and the proposed alignment is considered the most appropriate. A track extension further into the domain could cause conflict with existing sports fields, users and access. |
| Concern about loss of green space | 1 | Overall, the proposal will provide a net increase in native vegetation (using eco-sourced plantings). All areas of the Domain greenspace will continue to remain accessible for all users, via flat concrete accessibility pads (as per the existing CSME operation). While narrow strips of grass will be removed when the track itself is constructed, this is considered a minor effect. |