

Birdsey Reserve landscape plan analysis of submissions



Overview

Between 19 October and 16 November 2021, 62 submissions were received on the Birdsey Reserve landscape plan.

We asked for feedback on all aspects of the plan which includes two dog exercise areas, native planting, fruit trees, a food forest, food garden and car park extension. Our intention was to make it clear that all aspects of the plan were up for discussion. However, much of the feedback centralised around the proposal of dog exercise areas in the reserve.

The consultation was promoted through:

- A media release hosted by [Newsline](#) which was picked up by Bay Harbour News, Southern View and The Press newspapers
- The Newsline story was shared on Christchurch City Council's Facebook page and local community group pages
- The consultation document was distributed to 30 local resident and commercial properties
- Signage advertising the consultation was erected at two points of the reserve
- An email was sent out to 125 identified stakeholders advertising the consultation. This was followed up a week before consultation closed
- A drop in session was held on Monday 1 November at Heathcote Community Centre. Approximately 30 people attended this.

Submitter profile

47 submitters are local to the Birdsey Reserve area (categorised by those living in Heathcote postcode 8022), 13 live in wider Christchurch area and 2 didn't say.

Three submissions are from organisations and one from a Community Board, with the remainder being from individual residents.

Feedback

Overall, submitters are in favour of stage one of the landscape plan, which involves the community being able to continue with revegetation planting, and the development of a community food forest and garden by local community groups. Only one submitter is against this, with their feedback having to do with the maintenance costs of the food forest and gardens. Feedback included comments from students and parents from Heathcote Valley School who see revegetation planting as an important aspect of their education.

The importance of preserving nature is a key theme across all submissions (35% or 22 submitters commented on this), with 23% (14) of submitters wanting to continue supporting native birds through Birdsey Reserve, and 5% (3) of submitters mentioning the continued focus on ensuring that Birdsey Reserve remains predator free.

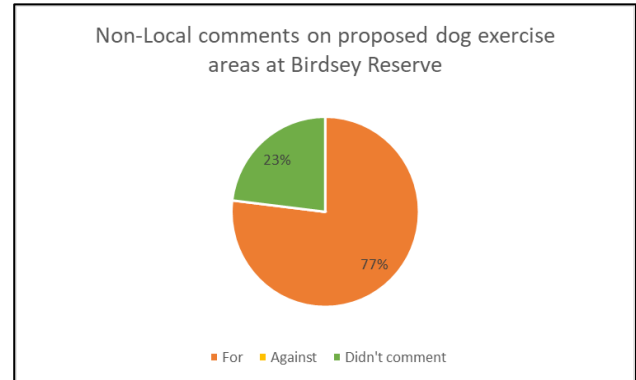
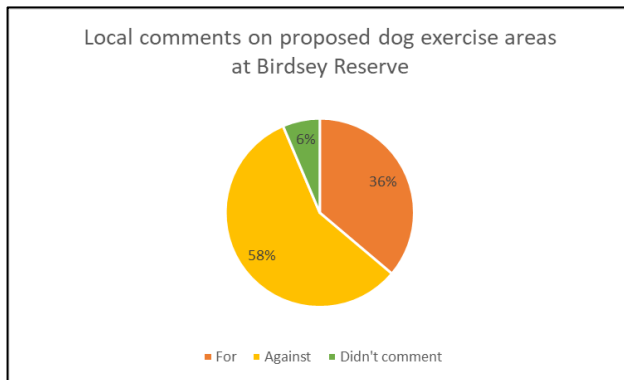
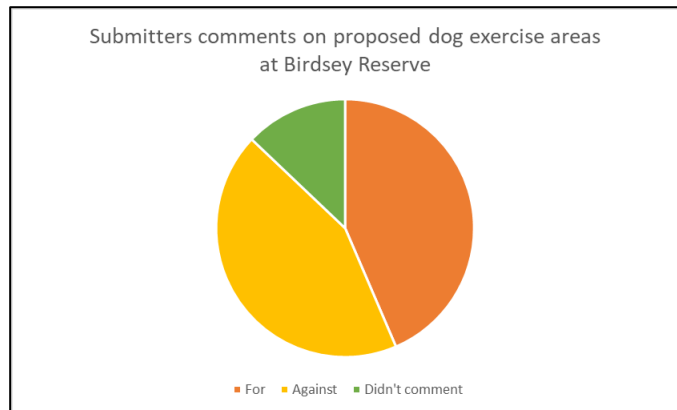
On the Facebook post sharing the Newsline story there were 60 like/love reactions and 11 comments (all of a positive nature). There were 4 comments on The Press' *Stuff* article. All of these were positive, and specifically favourable towards the inclusion of dog exercise areas.

Stage two development

Submitters are more divided in their feedback on the second stage of the landscape plan.

According to the feedback received, the most controversial aspect of stage two is the creation of dog exercise areas. Of the 62 total submissions, 27 (43%) are against and 27 (43%) are in favour, while eight did not provide a specific comment on this particular aspect of the proposal.

Locals were more likely to mention the dog exercise area in their submission - 94% (44) compared with 77% (10) from the wider Christchurch area. Locals were also less supportive of it - 58% of locals (27 submitters) are against it, while 36% (17 submitters) are in favour. No submitters from broader Christchurch are against the development of dog exercise areas at Birdsey Reserve.



Those in support of the dog exercise areas cite a lack of dog parks in the eastern side of the city as the main reason why. As is, some say that they have to drive to the other side of the city to access such a facility. It is also mentioned that it would be good to have a specified dog exercise area to keep dogs away from the wildlife at Ferrymead lakes, and that it could coexist with the nature initiatives present in Birdsey Reserve currently.

Of those against the dog exercise areas, 29% (8 submitters) recognise a need for a dog exercise area in the general area, but don't want it to be at Birdsey Reserve specifically. Many of these submitters suggest alternative locations for a dog exercise area. Note that all mentioned alternatives have been investigated by staff prior to deciding on Birdsey Reserve. This information was passed on to relevant submitters in response to their submissions.

Keeping Birdsey Reserve as a natural reserve is one of the key reasons given for not supporting the proposed dog exercise areas. Many submitters comment on the fact that the revegetation planting and food forest/garden were there first so should be prioritised. They recognise that the forest/garden could coexist with dog exercise areas, but feel that it would limit the growth of forest/garden and change the dynamic of the area. 29% (7) of those against the development of dog exercise areas and their accompanying car park worry that this would result in the removal of native trees and bush, which they would be against.

Another key concern from submitters is that Birdsey Reserve is a 'hidden gem' for locals and that further development of this area (namely the introduction of dog exercise areas) would increase its popularity. 37%

(10) of those against the development of dog exercise areas comment that they don't want additional people coming into the area. Respondents note that they like the rural feel of Heathcote – they like it being a space for locals only where the community, particularly children, can utilise this area to its fullest. 18% (5) of those against the development of dog exercise areas said that they were concerned about littering with the increased use of the area and 15% (4) of those against cited noise concerns (from dogs barking) as a factor.

A separate but related concern is that more people in the area will create safety issues. 41% (11) of those against the development of dog exercise areas highlight safety concerns:

- 64% (7) highlight that Bridle Path Road is already very busy and that motorists drive down the stretch in excess of the speed limit already. They wouldn't want to attract people to such a dangerous stretch of road
- 64% (7) highlight that Bridle Path Road is already very congested with parking, particularly in the weekends by users of the Bridle Path walk, the sports grounds and the community centre
- 45% (5) highlight that it is dangerous exiting the current Birdsey Reserve carpark as the line of sight on to Bridle Path Road is inadequate
- 18% (2) highlight that Birdsey Reserve is a popular area for children to play without adult supervision as only locals currently visit the area, and that introducing more people to the area would ruin this

One of the reasons for proposing a dog exercise area at Birdsey Reserve is that it could service two community boards, Waikura (Linwood-Central-Heathcote) and Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū (Banks Peninsula), who had both requested that staff explore options for a dog park in their communities. 14% (9) of all submitters expressly mention that a dog exercise area in Birdsey Reserve would be well utilised while 6% (4) say that it wouldn't. One submitter commented that they lived in Lyttelton and would utilise a dog exercise area in Heathcote, whereas Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū community board said that this location presented accessibility issues due to it being on the other side of the tunnel. They proposed that this issue could be alleviated by including secure bike parking to the landscape plan.

3% (2) of all submitters suggested the inclusion of children's' play equipment as an alternative to dog exercise areas.