

BELFAST AREA PLAN

Phase 1 Report – Recreation, Open Space and Community Values

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an initial assessment of the recreation and open space network for the Belfast area of Christchurch and identify current issues and opportunities related to the provision of resources and facilities. The Christchurch City Council has identified Belfast as an area of potential future growth and this report represents a proactive approach to addressing recreation and open space provision in the area.

The open space network in Belfast includes neighbourhood parks, conservation reserves and wetlands, sports grounds and community recreation facilities. The provision of urban parks, local parks and regional parks is encompassed by existing open space zoning. Conservation zones provide protection to key habitats and areas of high natural value as well as “green corridors” (green areas that link open spaces in urban areas) along the riverbanks. This pattern of public open space, linked by walkways and cycle ways along the streams and rivers, provides the basis for an integrated network of multipurpose open spaces in and around Belfast. The main recreational node in the Belfast area is Sheldon Park. It contains sports grounds, rugby clubrooms and other facilities which provide open space and recreation resources for local residents. Future extensions of Sheldon Park are likely to provide increased access to recreational open space as well as a community focal point.

Issues that have been identified in the Belfast area which are likely to affect the provision of recreational open space include the segregating effects of high volumes of traffic on Main North Road, pressures associated with population growth and trends for individual recreation activities. High volumes of traffic on Main North Road may potentially segregate recreational users who live on one side of Main North Road, but wish to access open space on the other side. In recognition of this problem, existing reserves need to be better networked and new residential areas should be more self sufficient, in terms of the provision of recreational open space. Like the rest of Christchurch, Belfast’s resident population grew substantially over the previous Census period, 2001 to 2006. This trend is likely to continue with the identification of three new growth areas in the Urban Development Strategy. Urban growth is likely to result in increased demand for recreational open space in the area, and providing sufficient open space to meet the needs of a growing population will be a key to ensuring the sustainability of community recreation in Belfast. National and local surveys of recreation participation have identified that individual activities, such as walking and cycling, are among the most popular forms of recreation for adults. As a result, there is an important need to extend the network of open space adjoining waterways, particularly along the Styx River and its tributaries, as well as linking to the north with the Otukaikino River and the Groynes to provide well-linked resources for recreational walking and cycling. Multipurpose reserves, which also include a provision for the management and treatment of storm water runoff, could also be developed. Increasing the area of such reserves and providing linkages will provide increased connectivity of open space and increased opportunities to extend walkways and cycle ways throughout the area.

DISCLAIMER

The Council does not guarantee the accuracy of the data or information contained in this Phase 1 Report. Whilst every endeavour has been made to compile data and information that is up to date and relevant, not all of it has been, or is capable of being verified. This report should not be relied upon for the purposes of any proposed property transaction, including subdivision or land use approvals and building consents. The recommendations provided in this report do not guarantee that any or all of the land is suitable for development.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This recreation and open space report is part of a series of papers on a range of issues for Phase One of the Belfast Area Plan. The primary aim of this paper is to provide the necessary background information and technical data, regarding recreation and open space within the Belfast area, to guide the development of the foundation documents for the final area plan. This report is organised into the following sections:

- ⇒ Background information
- ⇒ Statutory and non statutory framework
- ⇒ Consultation and community views
- ⇒ Key issues
- ⇒ Opportunities
- ⇒ Priorities
- ⇒ Conclusion

Recreation and open space are two of the key terms employed in this report. Recreation is a multidimensional concept which commonly refers to passive or physically active pursuits that are inherently pleasurable, freely chosen and undertaken during an individual's leisure time (Cushman & Laidler, 1990). Open space refers to protected lands and waters that are owned and managed by national, regional or local authorities and consist of any parcel of land and water that is devoted to 1) the preservation of natural areas; 2) the managed production of resources (forestry and farm land); 3) outdoor recreation; 4) preservation of historic and cultural property; 5) the protection of scenic landscapes; and 6) protection of public health safety and welfare (Urban Development Strategy, 2007).

Open spaces are important for the community because they contribute to making Christchurch a pleasant place to live, work and play as well as providing space for natural ecosystems and ecological biodiversity. They contribute to the "garden city" image of Christchurch and provide areas for both physically active and passive forms of recreation, such as sports participation, walking and picnicking. Additionally, open spaces contribute to sustaining the city's biodiversity by providing habitats for a wide range of wildlife, fish and invertebrates, as well as providing a stormwater treatment function.

With the expected population growth in Christchurch, there will be growing demand for a range of recreation and open space resources. The Belfast area has long been identified by the Christchurch City Council as a potential future growth area. Planning solutions are required to ensure that, as Belfast grows, there will be a network of attractive, varied and well-connected open spaces that contributes to the health and wellbeing of local residents and the natural environment.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 Population

Effective recreation and open space provision requires a clear understanding of the current and projected demographic characteristics of the resident population. This section provides a brief overview of the relevant demographic statistics for the Belfast area.

The resident population of Belfast in 2006 was 7,641 (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). This is a significant increase from the 2001 figure of 4,077. This population growth is due to the rapid increase in residential development which has occurred within the Belfast Area, particularly through the development of the large *Northwood* subdivision, located to the south of Belfast. This growth trend is likely to continue and there will be ongoing pressure to accommodate significant numbers of new households in the area.

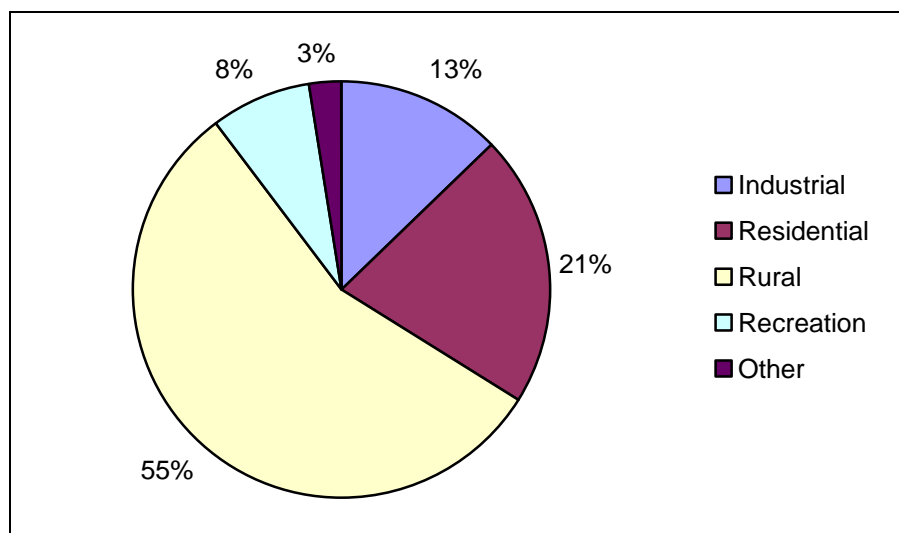
The Belfast population has a number of defining characteristics that have implications for recreation and open space planning. Compared to the rest of Christchurch, Belfast has a higher proportion of middle-aged adults (40 to 65 years) and young children (0 to 5 years) (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). The age profile of Belfast suggests that the Christchurch City Council needs to provide facilities which cater for young children and families in the short-term and recreational facilities for older adults over the longer-term.

Of additional relevance for recreation and open space planning, Belfast also has a higher proportion of European New Zealanders (78% compared to 75% for Christchurch as a whole) and higher levels of household incomes compared to many other parts of Christchurch (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). The relative wealth and Euro-centricity of Belfast will have implications for service provision within the suburb.

2.2 Existing recreational open space

The Belfast study area comprises approximately 1350 hectares of land, lying within the upper catchments of the Styx River and Kaputone Stream. This area has a range of land uses including; residential, industrial, rural and recreation and open space.

Figure 1: Existing Land use in the Belfast Area



There are a wide range of public open spaces within the Belfast area that contribute to the recreation experience of residents. These are characterised as local parks, district sports parks, conservation reserves, esplanade reserves, metropolitan parks, private recreation facilities, and cycle ways and walkways.

2.2.1 Local Parks

A number of small local parks are distributed throughout Belfast. These are generally less than a hectare and local in their character. The role of these parks is to provide accessible open spaces within a short distance from all living areas. They often contain playgrounds as well as expansive grassed areas and

landscaped sections. Utilisation of open space is variable across different open space areas and is dependent upon such factors as accessibility, visibility and maintenance. Examples of local parks include the following:

- ⇒ Beechwood Reserve
- ⇒ Bellymena Reserve
- ⇒ Castile Reserve
- ⇒ Darroch Reserve
- ⇒ Foley Reserve
- ⇒ Mounter Reserve
- ⇒ Tyrone Reserve
- ⇒ Tische Reserve
- ⇒ Waterford Reserve

2.2.2 District Sports Parks

In total, Belfast has approximately 14 hectares of land which is classified as district/sports parks. These are larger parks over two hectares in size serving a district function, with sports grounds and associated facilities. Prominent Belfast examples include the following:

- ⇒ Englefield Park
- ⇒ Northwood Reserve
- ⇒ Sheldon Park

Of these, Sheldon Park is the most important recreational resource in the area due to its central location, large size and capacity to support both winter and summer sports. The park is 10 hectares in size and contains provision for rugby, cricket, basketball, skateboarding, children's play, bowls and swimming. Sheldon Park has also been identified as a possible site for a new library given its central location to all of Belfast. The Kaputone Stream flows along the southern edge of the park. Belfast School is located adjacent to the park and also has frontage to Main North Road. Immediately to the east of Sheldon Park, are a number of pasture areas and some scattered building associated with the PPCS meat works site. Northwood and Englefield reserves are smaller by comparison at three and four hectares respectively. Both reserves have provision for senior and junior rugby and playground equipment.

2.2.3 Conservation Reserves

Belfast is also served by a number of conservation reserves which provide protection for local ecosystems and heritage features and provision for passive recreational activities, such as picnicking and wildlife viewing. The main conservation reserves within the Belfast area include Kapuatohe reserve, Styx mill reserve, Otukaikino (Wilson's Swamp) reserve and Esplanade reserves. Each of these reserves is discussed in more detail below.

The Kapuatohe reserve is relatively small, covering an area of less than one hectare. An old school house and *Crofter's Cottage* (a historically significant building) are located within the reserve. They are the last remaining links to the original Belfast School which used to be located on this site. The primary role of this reserve is to protect the historical features of the site and to ensure that the aforementioned buildings are retained. The Kaputone Stream runs diagonally across the north-western corner of the old school ground.

The Styx Mill Reserve covers an area of approximately 60 hectares. The long term objective for this reserve has been to establish three distinct parts consisting of a multipurpose reserve, a publicly accessible nature reserve, and a predator-free area focussing exclusively on wildlife conservation. If the proposed objectives for this reserve are attained, it will become one of the most significant metropolitan reserves for Belfast residents. It is also important to identify methods to expand this site.

Otukaikino Reserve covers an area of approximately 13 hectares and it is located at the southern end of the Northern Motorway. This reserve is managed by the Department of Conservation and is currently being restored in conjunction with donations from Lamb and Hayward funeral directors. The site contains a freshwater wetland and has been identified by tangata whenua as a burial site used by Te Runangi o Nga Tuahuriri as a burial preparation site. There is the potential to extend this site to the south; however, this would be dependent on funding and the ability to create a multipurpose space for recreation, stormwater detention and ecological enhancement. At present, this area has limited recreational value due to its relative inaccessibility; however, its use as a memorial site provides a walkway wilderness experience that, together

with its distinctiveness as the northern gateway to the city, provides a wider value to the people of Christchurch.

2.2.4 Esplanade Reserves

A number of esplanade reserves exist along the Styx River and Kaputone Stream. Such reserves have a number of purposes, such as providing for access as well as maintaining and enhancing ecological and recreational values. Unless, however, the esplanade reserves are linked to each other, or extended to adjoin other non-esplanade reserves, their recreational benefits will remain limited.

2.2.5 Metropolitan Parks

Metropolitan parks serve residents from all over the city, usually with a sports facility or centrally located park. The main metropolitan park in Belfast is the Groynes. The Groynes picnic area on Johns Road takes its name from the large concrete structures which were introduced to control the flow of the Waimakariri River. The wilderness and open spaces of this area, together with picnic and barbeque facilities, have made this a popular gathering place. The picnic area is primarily used for passive recreation and it also offers a number of walkways to explore the lakes. There are numerous walking tracks around the Groynes, the main one being the Waimari Walkway (5km). The Christchurch Model Yacht Club uses one of the lakes, and there are also opportunities for fishing and a variety of watercraft available for hire. The high recreational use and ecological values of the Groynes are incorporated in a development plan for the reserve (The Groynes Concept Plan, 2002). According to the plan, there are already approximately 600,000 visitors to the site annually.

2.2.6 Private Recreational Facilities

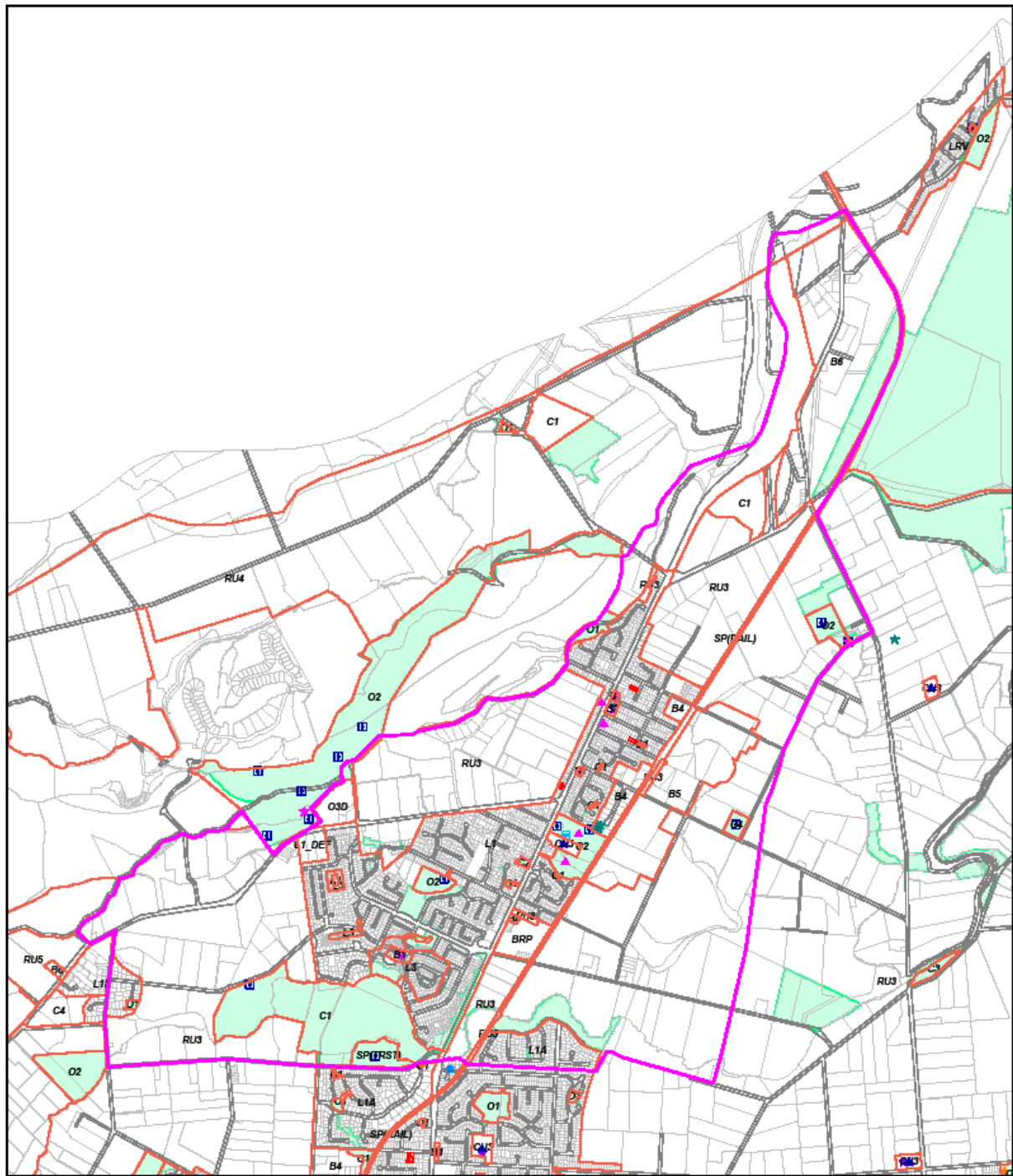
There are a number of private recreational facilities within, and just beyond, the Belfast area. Within the area is the Willowbank Wildlife Reserve, a private nature reserve with native bird species and an assortment of exotic farm animals. In addition, the sanctuary has an important role in nature conservation and education. Willowbank is open to the public for an entrance fee. To the north of Belfast, is the Clearwater Resort with its main attraction being the golf course. Clearwater lies between Johns Road, Belfast and the Waimakariri River to the north. The Clearwater golf course has both national and international recognition and provides an important sporting resource for members of the local community.

2.2.7 Cycle ways and Walkways

At present, there are very few cycle ways within the area and those that do exist are located along major roads. It is recognised that there are two types of cyclists: those that cycle for transport and those that cycle for recreation. Although there is a very significant overlap between the two groups, it does mean that there will be different objectives that must be met for each group. For example, those who cycle for transportation may be well served by the existing cycle ways on major roads; however, recreational cyclists are likely to also desire a network of cycle ways that are closer to their homes and which provide a scenic and comparatively safe environment. The Waimari Walkway is one of the most well-known walkways within the Belfast Area. There are also a number of shorter-distance walkways that are associated with some of the reserves in the area, such as the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve.

The existing network of community facilities and open spaces in Belfast are shown below in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Existing community facilities and open space



Legend

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Belfast Study Area | Composite Schools | School Halls | District Shopping Centre |
| Zone Boundary | Primary Schools | Scout Dens/Girl Guide Rooms | Local Shopping Centre |
| Council Housing | Secondary Schools | Sport and Recreational Clubrooms | Supermarket redeems Rubbish Bag Vouchers |
| Walking Tracks | Special Schools | Various Other Community Facilities | Public Toilets |
| Medical Centre, Hospital, Rest Home/Hospital | Church Halls | CCC Library | Terminals/Stations |
| Rest Homes | Community Houses/Halls/Centres | Voluntary Library | Swimming Pools |
| Childcare Centres | Convention Centres/Lesure Facilities | ServiceCentre | Park |

GIS & Data
Christchurch City Council



**Belfast Area Plan:
Community Facilities, Parks**

1:25,000 @ A3
0.0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1.0
Kilometers

Map Ref: 100064A.gws
Layout: A3
Date: 12/05/2008

2.3 Recreation and sports participation trends

2.3.1 Recreation participation

The Sport and Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) 2003 Trends Report is based on the results of the New Zealand Sport and Physical Activity Surveys conducted from 1997 to 2001. Over 12,500 New Zealand adults (people aged 18 and above) and over 4,000 young people (5-17 year olds) were interviewed about their participation in physical activity and sports. The key findings of the survey that relate to Christchurch are as follows:

- ⇒ 71% of young people in Canterbury/Westland are active, spending an average of 6.5 hours per week taking part in sports and active leisure.
- ⇒ More boys are active than girls. On average, boys spend 7.6 hours per week taking part in sport and active leisure/week compared to 5.5 hours for girls.
- ⇒ Most young people (70%) are involved in sport and active leisure during school. Approximately 15% of young people in this region take part in sports and activities organised by the school before or after the main school day. This is below the national average (21%).
- ⇒ A high proportion (72%) of young people in the region take part in sport and active leisure with family and friends, which is higher than the country as a whole (68%).
- ⇒ Between 1997 and 2001 the proportion of young people who are highly active rose, especially for girls.
- ⇒ The majority of young people (96%) take part in some sport or active leisure. The most popular sport for boys is soccer (29%) and for girls, athletics (16%). The most popular active leisure pursuit for boys is cycling (21%) and for girls, swimming (41%).
- ⇒ 70% of adults are active for more than 2.5 hours per week; however, only 40% are active for 30 minutes or more on at least five days a week.
- ⇒ 98% of all adults enjoy some form of sport or active leisure over a year. Golf is the most popular sport for men (32%) and women (10%). Walking is the most common way that men and women are active in their leisure time although this activity is more popular with women (84%), than with men (64%).

2.3.2 Sports Participation

Sports participation data has been collated by the Christchurch City Council Recreation & Sport Unit. The most popular winter sports in Christchurch between 1993 and 2007 include rugby, football and basketball. The majority of sports have had little or no growth, with rugby league, squash and indoor bowls showing a steady decline in participation numbers. The most popular summer sports in Christchurch have been cricket, golf and touch rugby. The majority of summer codes in Christchurch have had steady or no significant growth, with the exception of bowls which has had a steady decrease in numbers due to its aging membership; although, this trend is slowly being reversed with recent increases in junior members.

Christchurch City has long boasted a heritage of sporting performance and participation by people within the region. In 2007, the Christchurch City Council Recreation and Sport Unit contracted the Canterbury West Coast Sports Trust to undertake a Sports Participation Report to investigate the composition and number of members for eight of the major outdoor sports in Christchurch, including rugby, cricket, hockey, athletics, touch rugby, softball, football and rugby league. The Sports Participation Report also indicated that the most popular sports in 2006/2007 were cricket in summer and rugby in winter, with a large numbers of children and adults playing these sports on an annual basis. Football and touch rugby also had large numbers of junior and senior players. Sports clubs were identified as the main vehicle for participation for the majority of sports, with the exception of cricket, which has a larger percentage of schools involved in the delivery of the sport.

In the Belfast area, the sports membership figures indicate that there will not be a huge amount of growth from existing clubs in this area, but new clubs and sports may arise and place pressure on existing resources as the residential population increases. Currently, a Metropolitan Sports Facilities Plan is in development which will outline the provision of Major Sports Facilities for Christchurch into the future. It is not envisioned that a major metropolitan sports facility will be located in the Belfast area in the near future.

2.3.3 Recreation trends

The following trends were identified within the Christchurch City Council Physical Recreation and Sport Strategy 2002 and provide valuable context and direction for planning and decision making regarding the provision of space, facilities, services and programmes.

The Changing Family

- ⇒ More sole parents and multiple families.
- ⇒ Lack of fathers and male role models.
- ⇒ The increasing pace of life and loosening moral codes are eroding traditional family structures.
- ⇒ Increasing dual work/career families and more women in the workforce for longer.

Consequences

- ⇒ Increased demand for childcare and recreation services that take responsibility for children whilst parents are working.
- ⇒ The numbers of unsupervised teenagers will increase creating a need for appropriate and responsive physical recreation and sport activities for them.
- ⇒ Changes to working patterns will make it more difficult for families to organize leisure time together.
- ⇒ Families that play together, stay together. Families will increasingly look for physical recreation and sport activities they can enjoy together. Places offering activities for children and adults at one venue will prove popular.

Employment Changes

- ⇒ Pace of life increasing.
- ⇒ Increasing disparity of free time means some will have more free time through unemployment or underemployment but limited financial resources. Others will become time-poor and income rich, valuing time greatly and looking to maximize the quality of their free time.
- ⇒ Work patterns are more individualized and less predictable with the working week now covering seven days and 24 hours.
- ⇒ Becoming more difficult for groups or families to organize collective recreation activities.

Consequences

- ⇒ The demand for programmed recreation activities (that can be booked, scheduled and slotted) will increase.
- ⇒ People will be more willing to pay for a quality service where the time commitment is reduced rather than committing time to administration of the recreation or sports organization.
- ⇒ Multi-use leisure facilities catering for both a range of recreation/sport and artistic/cultural forms of leisure will be popular with the time-poor and income-rich.
- ⇒ Extended opening hours will be required at physical recreation and sport facilities and services to meet varying leisure-time patterns.
- ⇒ Social sport will only be accessible to those who can control their leisure time.
- ⇒ Physical recreation and sport activities that consume large amounts of fixed time and high levels of organisation will decline and new short sports will develop further.
- ⇒ The ability of physical recreation and sport organizations to utilize volunteer time will reduce further with the focus for volunteer efforts switching from long-term commitments to short-term projects.
- ⇒ There will be a need to provide low cost physical recreation and sport opportunities for those who are disadvantaged (particularly the unemployed or underemployed) otherwise many will opt out of physical recreation.

Individualism

- ⇒ Increasing promotion and pursuit of self-interest, rather than the good of the community or group. Evidenced by such things as the decline in marriage as an institution and the rise in divorce rates, the increasing delay before people leave home and start families. The driving question for sport and recreation participation is what's in it for me?
- ⇒ Whilst individualism is on the rise, the core values of being a good citizen will remain.

Consequences

- ⇒ There will be a further decrease in volunteerism with reward being sought for work/service in physical recreation and sport organizations.
- ⇒ There will be more choice and diversity of individualistic recreation activities sought.

- ⇒ Home-centred recreation opportunities (i.e. those within the home or within close proximity of the home) will become more popular.
- ⇒ Some will desire tailor-made recreation services and recreation/life-style coaches and personal trainers will emerge offering services for a fee.
- ⇒ Community and social affiliation will be sought by some through physical recreation and sport.
- ⇒ Communities of interest will become more relevant than communities of place.
- ⇒ Individual-oriented recreation activities will become increasingly popular. For example, walking and cycling.

Inactivity

- ⇒ The levels of activity appear to be falling in the western world and levels of obesity are rising in New Zealand. There are a number of factors contributing to these trends including: work becoming more sedentary in nature, lifestyles becoming dependent on cars, technology reducing activity (e.g. computers, garage door openers), increasing passive leisure opportunities presented by information technology and demand for ready to eat food that has a high fat content.
- ⇒ There are significant health risks associated with a sedentary lifestyle including increased likelihood of coronary heart disease, stroke, arthritis, diabetes and some cancers.
- ⇒ Personal health care and vanity (including diet control and fitness) are already significant consumer industries and these will grow further in the future.

Consequences

- ⇒ Increased lifestyle diseases (e.g. coronary heart disease, strokes and certain cancers) that will limit people's physical recreation and sport choices.
- ⇒ Increasing government campaigns will target enhanced active recreation and will aim to involve local government and other physical recreation and sport providers in a multi-sectoral approach.
- ⇒ Walking, swimming and cycling will continue in popularity for their health benefits.
- ⇒ Local government will be encouraged to provide walkways, cycle-ways and better street lighting and security to provide enhanced opportunities for exercising.
- ⇒ Facilities will provide programmes with a greater educational content that enhance lifestyle through active recreation.
- ⇒ There will be greater co-operation and liaison between physical recreation and sport providers, GPs and physiotherapists with many locating near or in recreation facilities.
- ⇒ Targeted programmes will be provided for children, women, disadvantaged groups and older adults that aim to enhance activity levels.
- ⇒ Targeted programmes will be provided for men aged 25 to 54 years aimed at weight reduction.
- ⇒ Physical recreation and sport providers will use the health and fitness message as a significant selling point for their activities.

Consumerism

- ⇒ Increasing expectations of service quality, expecting high standards, added value and immediacy. These expectations are now well established and can be expected to increase further.
- ⇒ Businesses succeed or fail based on their service standards and relationships with customers.
- ⇒ Old notions of service adequacy will not be sufficient.
- ⇒ Physical recreation and sport will be more and more an element of individual consumption to be purchased to satisfy desires in the same way as many products.

Consequences

- ⇒ Spending on recreational goods and services will continue to rise.
- ⇒ There is increased commodification of physical recreation and sport evidenced by the purchase of leisure toys such as jet skis, wind surfers etc.
- ⇒ People will expect professional levels of service from all physical recreation and sport providers and their facilities.
- ⇒ Meeting this standard will require a change in mindset and skill set for some providers.
- ⇒ Physical recreation and sport providers will need to think in terms of presenting a good value proposition i.e. providing value for people's investment of time and money.

Risk Awareness

- ⇒ New Zealanders are more sensitised to risk minimization in the different domains of their lives including physical recreation and sport.
- ⇒ Personal safety has become a serious concern, particularly for women.

- ⇒ Globally, there is an increased tendency to litigate against organizations when personal harm is caused.
- ⇒ The potential scaling back of ACC benefits may result in increased risk of litigation in New Zealand.

Consequences

- ⇒ The public is more aware of health and safety issues and will be more demanding of physical recreation and sport organizations to ensure that health and safety is well provided for and less accepting of any organizational weaknesses.
- ⇒ Increased costs will be required to meet risk reduction requirements, which may exclude low-income participants via price barriers.
- ⇒ Minimising risk to the public may cause physical recreation and sport organizations to adopt policy, equipment design and practice that lead to a boring recreational landscape and a loss of the adventure element of participation.
- ⇒ Perceived lack of personal safety will restrict night time physical recreation and sport activity.

Population Ageing

- ⇒ The Christchurch population is getting older in line with national trends. Over the next few decades (to 2021) the median age is expected to increase to 41.4 years.
- ⇒ There will also be a reduction in the proportion of children (0-14 years) and an increase in the proportion and number of people aged 65 years and over.
- ⇒ The increasing number of elderly will become particularly pronounced when the baby boomers start to reach retirement age at about 2011.

Consequences

- ⇒ Ageing population will become a very significant group seeking recreation provision.
- ⇒ The over 65s are not a homogeneous group in terms of recreation need or ability. Consequently physical recreation and sport providers will need to match activities to the varying needs.
- ⇒ A further increase in residential housing and apartment living for older citizens (for security reasons and the need for social contact) will be required.
- ⇒ Interest in masters sport will continue to grow.
- ⇒ The commercial sector will recognize older people as a significant market and provide recreation for a fee for those that can afford it.
- ⇒ Retirement income may fall (worldwide) as governments reduce benefits and/or raise the age of entitlement. Poorer older citizens will either rely on their family or will remain disadvantaged. Providing for the physical recreation and sport needs of poorer older citizens will be a challenge

3.0 STATUTORY AND NON STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

This section describes the statutory and non-statutory legislation that influences open space and recreation planning and provision, and extracts the key components relevant to Belfast. In addition, it briefly discusses how legislation and the Christchurch City Plan objectives and policies are likely to direct the provision of open space where parts of the Belfast Area are urbanised in the future.

3.1 Statutory framework

3.1.1 *Local Government Act (LGA) (2002) and Long Term Council Community Plan*

Under Section 93 of this Act, the Council is required to develop a Long-Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP). The key features of this plan are as follows:

- ⇒ It describes the type of community the people of Christchurch would like to live in, and the things they would like to see for their community;
- ⇒ It shows how the Council and other organisations will work to build that community;
- ⇒ It explains what the Council will be doing for the next three years; and
- ⇒ It contains the Council's business plan for the coming year and looks ahead for another nine years.

The LTCCP requires the Council to meet the identified community outcomes. One of the underlying purposes of the Belfast area plan will be to achieve a number of community outcomes. Table 1 illustrates those community outcomes most relevant to the provision of open space.

Table 1: LTCCP Community Outcomes 2006 – 2012

Community Outcomes 2006-2012		How will the South-West Area Plan contribute to the community outcomes in relation to parks and open space
A city of people who value and protect the natural environment	Our lifestyles reflect our commitment to guardianship of the natural environment in and around Christchurch. We actively work to protect, enhance and restore our environment for future generations.	⇒ Managing land use to minimise adverse impacts on water and air quality, and the impact of noise ⇒ Implementing policies that require new developments to provide land or contributions, for park and open space.
A city for recreation, fun and creativity	We value leisure time and recognise that the arts, sports and other recreational activities contribute to our economy, identity, health and well-being.	⇒ Providing recreation and sport facilities: swimming pools, leisure centres, sports fields, walkways, parks, waterways and wetlands ⇒ Undertaking a review of recreational infrastructure, programmes and services to ensure alignment to current and future community needs
An attractive and well-designed city	Christchurch has a vibrant centre, attractive neighbourhoods and well-designed transport networks. Our lifestyles and heritage are enhanced by our urban environment.	⇒ Ensuring a balanced system of open lands, natural areas, recreation spaces, and parks through good urban planning

Christchurch City Council must ensure that all its activities contribute to achieving Community Outcomes. To this end, the Council has developed a set of four strategic directions or broad sets of goals and objectives that define the Council's role in achieving the Community Outcomes. The four strategic directions are as follows:

- ⇒ Strong Communities
- ⇒ Healthy Environment
- ⇒ Liveable City
- ⇒ Prosperous Economy

These strategic directions will guide the Council's planning and delivery of services. Table 2 outlines the goals and objectives of each strategic direction as they are relevant to the Belfast Area Plan.

Table 2: Christchurch City Council Strategic Directions

Strategic Directions	Relevant Goals and Objectives
Strong Communities	⇒ Encourage healthy and active lifestyles by providing parks, public buildings, and other facilities that are accessible, safe, welcoming and enjoyable to use; ⇒ Encourage residents to enjoy living in the city and to have fun by providing a variety of safe, accessible and welcoming local parks and open spaces.
Healthy Environment	⇒ Manage water and land drainage systems efficiently and in a manner that contributes to landscape, ecology, recreation, heritage and cultural values by reducing the risk of flooding; protecting and enhancing natural waterways; and managing land use to minimise its impact on surface and groundwater. ⇒ Strengthening the Garden city image by providing a variety of safe, accessible and welcoming local parks and open spaces; maintaining levels of open space; providing street landscapes and urban open space that enhance the character of the city; protecting and enhancing significant areas of open space within the metropolitan area; and using open space design and maintenance practices that reduce the use of natural resources. ⇒ Identify, protect and enhance the city's native and exotic ecosystems by working with partners to establish new and protect existing habitats for native species.
Liveable City	⇒ Maintain and enhance the quality of development and renewal of the city's built environment by improving people's sense of community identity and their feelings of safety; and improving the way in which public and private spaces work together.

3.1.2 Reserves Act 1977

The Reserves Act (1977) provides the mandate to preserve and manage areas of New Zealand with some special feature or value for the benefit and enjoyment of the public. It provides for the acquisition of land for

reserves and the classification and management of reserves (including leases and licenses). It also specifies eight different types of reserve, of which only the following three types are applicable to the Council:

- ⇒ Recreation Reserves – for recreation and sporting activities
- ⇒ Scenic Reserves – for protection and preservation of areas for their intrinsic worth and for public benefit, enjoyment and use, areas of scenic interest or beauty or features worthy of protection in the public interest
- ⇒ Local Purpose Reserves – for particular local government purposes specified, e.g., utility.

Other types of reserves not mentioned above are administered either by the Department of Conservation or by other ministers, boards, trustees, societies and other organisations appointed to control and manage the reserve, or in whom reserves are vested.

3.1.3 *Resource Management Act 1991 and Resource Management Amendment Act 2003*

The Resource Management Act (1991) (amended in 2003) provides the framework for achieving sustainable development in New Zealand. The purpose of the Act is “*to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources ... whilst enabling people and communities to provide for their social well-being*”. The Act provides the basis for the City Plan.

3.2 **Non statutory framework**

3.2.1 *Christchurch City Plan*

The Christchurch City Plan (notified in 1995) contains several objectives and policies relating to the natural environment, recreation and open space. The objectives focus on provision and diversity, efficient and effective use, and the design and appearance of open space, as well as mitigating any adverse environmental effects that may arise from the establishment and use of open space and recreational facilities. These objectives are given effect through a number of policies relating to addressing areas of deficiency, maintaining convenience and accessibility, development contributions from subdivision and building, and the need for land acquisition for additional open space. The following provides an overview of the significant objectives, policies and rules which are likely to impact of recreation within the Belfast Area.

Objective 14.1(a): Open spaces and recreational facilities that are equitably distributed and conveniently located throughout the City.

In the Belfast area, this objective means ensuring that all members of the community have the ability to reach some type of open space. Many parts of the area are well served in terms of access to open space; however, there are some areas which could be better provided for.

Objective 14.1(b): Diversity in the type and size of open spaces and recreational facilities to meet local, district, regional and nationwide needs.

The Belfast Area is fortunate in that it has a wide range of open spaces and recreational areas, and this objective aims to ensure this remains the case.

- ⇒ **Policy 14.1.1 Areas of deficiency: To identify those areas of the City where there are, or are likely to be, deficiencies in the provision of open space and recreational facilities and provide or facilitate the provision of additional open space of facilities to overcome these deficiencies.**

Any new urban area should be aware of the areas illustrated as being deprived of accessible open space and actively seek to overcome these through the provision of networked open space.

- ⇒ **Policy 14.1.2 Convenience and accessibility: To provide for new open spaces and recreational facilities to establish in locations that are convenient and accessible for anticipated users.**

The Local Parks Acquisition Strategy (1996) in relation to parks deficiencies and accessibility throughout the City concluded that the Belfast Area was not an area deficient in recreational open space.

- ⇒ **Policy 14.1.3 Contributions from subdivision and development: To require contributions towards the provision of public open space and recreation areas from subdivision and/or development for:**
 - (a) Residential purposes to provide additional local and district parks; and
 - (b) Business purposes to provide additional open space to enhance amenity values and meet the leisure requirements of workers in and visitors to business areas.

This policy provides the basis for requiring developers, of either living or business zones, to contribute to the provision of open space within the area.

- ⇒ **Policy 14.1.6 Existing open space: To recognise the contribution of existing areas of open space to the City including private open space, and where appropriate maintain the open space function of such areas.**
- ⇒ **Policy 14.1.7 Large scale private facilities: To recognise and provide for the operation of large scale private open spaces and recreational facilities in the City.**

There are a number of private open spaces near or surrounding this area, the largest being Clearwater, but also Willowbank on the Styx River. These areas contribute directly to the recreational opportunities of the local community. Continued provision of new private open spaces or the enhancement of existing facilities should be greatly encouraged.

- ⇒ **Policy 14.1.8 Metropolitan recreational open space and facilities: To develop or facilitate the development of metropolitan, regional or national recreational open space and facilities.**

At present, the main metropolitan facility within the area is the Groynes. However, it is likely that future development of the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve will mean that this conservation reserve will also become recognised as a metropolitan open space. The ability to increase and enhance each of these open spaces will be an important focus of the Belfast Area Plan. The functions of both of these areas are obviously very different, with the Styx Mill Conservation Reserve having a strong conservation focus as well as a recreational one.

- ⇒ **Policy 14.1.9 Types: To develop, or facilitate the development of a wide variety of open space types and recreational facilities, ranging from indoor facilities to local, district and metropolitan reserves.**

There is a wide range of open spaces within the Belfast Area, from small neighbourhood parks to the large district parks, most particularly Sheldon Park, which is centrally located. There are also a number of parks along the Styx River which provide a more ecological experience. The Groynes provides an important metropolitan asset with an outdoor focus. The provision of a library within Sheldon Park will improve the indoor recreational facilities. It is considered that in combination with the range of indoor facilities provided within the North West quadrant of the City, including the *Graham Condon* Pool Complex, that there are sufficient indoor sports facilities provided in the area.

There is only one school located within the Belfast Area, which is located adjacent to Sheldon Park. In many parts of the wider Christchurch City, schools often provide an additional recreational role within the local communities.

- ⇒ **Policy 14.4.10 Diversity of environments: That open space contains and protects representative examples of the diversity of the natural environment and heritage parks within the City.**

There are a number of riparian reserves within this area; however access to them is variable. The riparian environment comprises the type of remaining natural habitat within the area, and therefore this is where the focus of this type of recreational asset is located. There is one heritage-type park within the area.

- ⇒ **Policy 14.1.11 Green linkages: To maintain the diversity of natural areas and enhance the City's system of recreational areas by providing "green" linkages between them.**

The Belfast area is a subset of the Styx Catchment, and in relation to natural areas and linkages the concept of "human-defined" areas has little meaning. The most obvious natural backbone for any network of linkages is to follow the waterways of the area, namely the Styx River and the Kaputone Stream. These and other waterways flow almost as a boundary around the east and the south of the area, with numerous smaller waterways flow to the west and east.

- ⇒ **Policy 14.1.12 Surface waters: To enhance the role of the City's water resources and coastal margins both for conservation and for environmentally compatible recreational uses.**
- ⇒ **Policy 14.1.13 Surface and margins of rivers: To develop and manage the recreational use of the surface and margins of the City's rivers in a way that does not adversely affect their natural and ecological values, bank stability and adjoining activities.**

Both of these policies relate to the waterway environments within the Belfast area, and highlight the need to ensure that recreational and environmental policies and rules support each other. In Belfast, this should result in land uses along waterways being compatible with broader recreation and environmental goals. A rule that is likely to have a direct effect on this Area is through the provision of esplanade reserve rules relating to excavating and filling, and building and waterway setback provisions.

Objective 14.2 Efficient and effective use: The efficient and effective use of open space and recreational facilities in meeting the recreational needs of the community.

- ⇒ **Policy 14.2.1 Multiple Use: Enhanced public awareness and enjoyment of the City's open spaces and recreational facilities.**
- ⇒ **Policy 14.2.2 Multiple Use: To recognise and overcome conflicts which exist between different types of recreational activities, whilst at the same time encouraging the multiple use of open space and recreational facilities, wherever possible and practical.**

This later policy is often difficult to accomplish when there is either a lack of space and or rapidly changing trends in recreational activities.

- ⇒ **Policy 14.2.3 Quality: To produce, implement and review management and landscape concept plans for public open space and recreational facilities.**

Objective 14.3 Design and Appearance: Open spaces and recreational facilities that are designed to be sympathetic to the scale and character of the surrounding environment, and to the particular characteristic of the area itself.

This Objective and its respective policies 14.3.1 to 14.3.4 all seek to encourage that the provision of additional Open Space should seek to promote the Garden City image of Christchurch. Such Open space should also seek to relate to, and enhance the characteristics of the local area, whether it be by way of landscape types, layout or setting.

Objective 4.2 Amenity: A pleasant and attractive City.

- ⇒ **Policy 4.2.1 Tree cover: To promote amenity values in the urban area by maintaining and enhancing tree cover present in the City.**

It will be important for any historically significant or botanically important trees or groups of trees to have statutory protection. It is also important to ensure that tree species are planted within open spaces for their amenity and recreational values. There are not many protected trees afforded statutory protection by the City Plan for the Belfast Area. However, significant strands of protected trees are located at the intersection of the Main North Road and Christchurch Northern Motorway, along Johns Road, and south of the Kaputone Stream along the Main North Road.

- ⇒ **Policy 4.2.2 Garden City: To recognise and promote the “Garden City” identity, heritage and character of Christchurch.**
- ⇒ **Policy 4.2.4 Public Space: To ensure the development and protection of the quality of public open space.**

Objective 2.2 Water: Maintenance and enhancement of the quality and availability of the City’s water resources, and of the natural and cultural values and public accessibility of waterways and their margins.

- ⇒ **Policy 2.2.10 Esplanade reserves: That provision for the protection of conservation values, recreational opportunities and public access to and along the margins of rivers and the coast be achieved through esplanade reserves, esplanade strips and access strips, in locations and of a width appropriate to the nature of the waterways and its adjoining land use.**

The important interaction between the waterways and recreation area are identified through this objective and policy. Based on the importance of waterways within the area it will be important to use the provision of Esplanade Reserves as a “spine” by which to anchor ecological, access and recreational values through the Area Plan, and also to increase connectivity between urban blocks.

Objective 2.9 Environmental Awareness: Greater awareness of environmental issues, particularly those relating to the value of significant natural environmental assets of the City.

- ⇒ **Policy 2.9.1 Natural features and habitats: To encourage greater public awareness of important natural features and habitats within the City, particularly waterways, the coast and their margins, the Port Hills and indigenous grasslands.**

This objective and policy is important for the Belfast area due to the key role that waterways will have in providing recreational opportunities for the community in this area. An example of this will be the proposed plans for the Styx Mill Reserve to be a multi-use and multi function area, where recreational activities can be combined with environmental awareness and provide an improved understanding of the natural environment and biodiversity.

3.2.2 *Physical Recreation and Sport Strategy September 2002*

In 2002, a Physical Recreation and Sport Strategy was developed for the city of Christchurch and the key goals from that strategy that are applicable to the Belfast area include:

- ⇒ **Goal One - facilities and environment** - A safe physical environment that encourages participation in recreation and sport
- ⇒ **Goal Two - availability and accessibility** - A wide range of physical recreation and sport activities that are made available to all citizens of Christchurch and beyond
- ⇒ **Goal Three - motivation and awareness** - A public that is aware of physical recreation and sport activities and motivated to take part
- ⇒ **Goal Four - effective providers** - Physical recreation and sport providers that are effective and working together in a co-ordinated manner

3.2.3 *Strengthening Communities Strategy 2007*

In July 2007 a Strengthening Communities Strategy was developed for the City of Christchurch. A key goal of the strategy in relation to open space was Goal Six, which seeks “...*Increasing participation in community recreation and sport programmes and events.* Supporting community recreation and sport programmes and events will continue to be one of the ways that Council contributes to strengthening communities in Christchurch. This is because community recreation and sport has key benefits to individuals and the wider community. In particular, community recreation and sport can play a significant role in helping people to experience a sense of belonging and to improve their links with others. In this context, community recreation and sport refers to all forms of indoor and outdoor pastimes. This will include, but is not limited to, play, games, fitness, sports, performing and creative arts. The Council plans to undertake the following actions:

- ⇒ Promote the value of integrating recreation and sport into everyday life
- ⇒ Facilitate or deliver accessible and meaningful recreation and sport opportunities for everyone
- ⇒ Provide advice and resources to internal and external stakeholders
- ⇒ Facilitate or deliver community recreation and sport leadership training and education
- ⇒ Conduct and respond to research and evaluation

3.2.4 Christchurch Cycling Strategy 2004

The vision of the strategy is to achieve a cycle friendly city '*...Where the benefits of cycling as a safe, enjoyable and popular form of transport and recreation are valued by the community, and recognition of these benefits leads to growth in cycling.*'. The key objectives and targets of the strategy are as follows:

1. To increase cycling in Christchurch
 - ⇒ To increase the percentage of the population who commute to work by cycle to 10% in 2011
 - ⇒ To increase the percentage of intermediate and secondary school age students who cycle to school by 20% in 2008 & 24% in 2012
 - ⇒ To increase the percentage of the population who cycle for recreation to 30% by 2012 (already reached)
 - ⇒ To increase the percentage of people who cycle regularly to 34% in 2008
2. To increase the enjoyment of cycling in Christchurch
 - ⇒ To increase the percentage of the population who think cycling in Christchurch isn't unsafe to 73% in 2008, and 75% by 2012 *
 - ⇒ To increase the percentage of cyclists who think vehicle drivers are considerate from 37% 2008 and to 40% by 2012
3. To improve safety for cyclists in Christchurch
 - ⇒ To reduce the cyclist collision injury rate from one accident per 1020 cyclists in 2008 to one in 1150 cyclists in 2012

3.2.5 Christchurch Pedestrian Strategy

The Christchurch City Council promotes walking, as both recreation and transport, in Belfast and throughout the rest of Christchurch with its Pedestrian Strategy (2001). The pedestrian policy statement has the following goals:

- ⇒ The pedestrian environment is friendly, safe and accessible.
- ⇒ More people walk, more often.
- ⇒ All pedestrians are able to move about freely and with confidence.

3.2.6 Metropolitan Sport Facilities Plan

The draft metropolitan sports facility plan is currently available for public consultation. The draft plan considers all options for the city including upgrading, redeveloping and expanding existing facilities in looking to provide a 25-year, city-wide plan. The Plan will also consider opportunities for partnerships to provide the city with an infrastructure of world-class sporting facilities. The Metropolitan Sports Facilities Plan will take into consideration the Urban Development Strategy, Christchurch's ageing population, the cultural diversity of the community, changing demands for international sporting events and the capacity of existing facilities.

The Plan will not include aquatic facility, sports fields or marine or coastal facilities, and will not provide a forum to address issues relating to the pricing structure for community use of indoor facilities. Initial observations from the planning process indicate little or no impact on the Belfast area at this time.

3.2.7 Aquatic Facilities Plan 2006

From 1992 to 1994 the Council carried out what was termed a Strategic Review of Christchurch swimming pools. In March 1995 the Council agreed to redevelop the Centennial pool, to build a leisure pool at Pioneer and to provide at QEII an Olympic 10-lane pool, and a leisure/wave pool. Council also requested that staff report back in respect to any future proposed aquatic/leisure centre developments once the Pioneer and Centennial Leisure Centres were operational.

At that time, the Council saw its priorities as being the need to investigate future developments in Sockburn/Hornby and Papanui, followed by an upgrade at Jellie Park. An upgrade of the Jellie Park Aqualand is currently underway and will be completed by 2008. This will update the existing facility and add an eight-lane, deep-water pool, spa, toddler's pool and an indoor recreational feature.

In June 2006 an Aquatic Facilities Plan was approved by Council which outlined an implementation plan for aquatic facilities in the city. With the development of a new pool complex (Graham Condon Leisure Centre) at Papanui in partnership with Northlands Mall and Papanui High School scheduled for development in 2009. The closure of Papanui pool, Edgware pool has been completed and the Belfast pool is scheduled to be closed in 2009 at the end of the 2008/09 summer season.

The closure of the Belfast pool will have some ramifications for the residents of the Belfast area further discussions will need to be identified.

4.0 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Effective consultation and community involvement is central to the success of sustainable outcomes for the effective provision of open space in the Belfast Area. It is also a requirement under the Resource Management Act (1991) and Local Government Act (2002). Since 1996, the Council has consulted the community on a number of occasions regarding, among other issues, reflections on current recreation and open space provision and the identification of community needs.

In 1996, a needs analysis was undertaken to identify the recreation and community service needs of Belfast residents. Community issues relating to recreation in Belfast included the following:

- ⇒ Residents felt that Main North Road should be made safer for pedestrians, particularly children, as traffic volumes made it difficult and dangerous to cross.
- ⇒ Residents perceived that there was a lack of recreation facilities in the northwest of Belfast.
- ⇒ A park in the area of Darroch Street was requested partly because of the difficulties for children crossing Main North Road to access Sheldon Park.
- ⇒ There was also a concern among parents that cycling in Belfast was not safe for their children.

In 2003, two public meetings were held in the Belfast area to ascertain community sentiment regarding a range of local issues, including recreation and open space. As part of community consultation, local residents requested the following:

- ⇒ Development of a series of accessible and high quality parks and open spaces which could provide opportunities for both formal and informal recreation participation.
- ⇒ Provision of open space within 500m of suburban dwellings and, where possible, for pedestrian connections to be developed between local open spaces.
- ⇒ Recreation and open space provision which reflects the diversity of the Belfast population.
- ⇒ Facilities and buildings provided and maintained within open spaces to facilitate formal and informal recreation.
- ⇒ Development of open spaces and pedestrian walkways to increase integration of community resources across Belfast.

A further community and recreation needs analysis was undertaken in 2006. Issues identified in the report included the following:

- ⇒ Belfast Pool has been identified as a key gathering point for young people in the summertime.
- ⇒ There is a need for a multipurpose community facility which is able to meet the diverse needs of preschoolers, children, youth and the elderly.
- ⇒ There is a lack of arts and cultural opportunities and growing demand for provision for passive recreation activities
- ⇒ Parks and green spaces are regarded as adequate; however, there are a lack of safe walking and cycling tracks connecting these areas.
- ⇒ Safety concerns in relation to the high volumes of traffic on Main North Road persist.
- ⇒ Sheldon Park has issues of poor visibility and surveillance.

5.0 KEY ISSUES

5.1 Improving Accessibility

One of the key issues raised through previous public consultation was the level of pressure on the existing reserves within the area, particularly Sheldon Park. The community wanted to ensure that, if the Belfast Area was to be further developed, recreational areas would also be developed to meet demand and that they should be accessible to the local community.

The current provision of recreational open space appears to meet existing and projected population demand. However, if future residential development occurred to the north or west there would be a requirement for additional reserves. There are also significant impediments to movements across to the existing Belfast residential areas, (i.e. Main North Road and Johns Road) that may need to be overcome by internalising recreational opportunities within larger residential areas and by linking open spaces as much as is possible.

There is some potential for the growth of Sheldon Park as it is not totally surrounded by residential development. This is limited, however, and will be dependent on the purchase of land presently owned by PPCS and the ability to provide a linkage across the Main North rail corridor. Expansion of Sheldon Park may not meet all the sports needs associated with future growth to the north and west of Belfast. There is significant rural land to the north of Belfast, south of Main North Road and south of Wilson's Swamp (Otukaikino Reserve) where there may be some potential to develop reserve land. It is also likely that any major growth in the area will put more pressure on Ouruhia Park to the east, despite being located outside the Belfast Area Plan study area.

The accessibility problem is a major issue in terms of any future development to the west of Belfast. The large area of the Groynes and Clearwater initially make the area appear to be well provided for in terms of recreation. However, it is unlikely that Clearwater will be used by most local residents due to the costs associated with the resource. In addition, the Groynes is very much a City-wide reserve and is unlikely to meet the general recreation needs of a growing urban population to the northwest of John's Road and Main North Road. Provision of recreational areas will be vital on the western side of Belfast as the two previously mentioned roads can be too busy to allow free and safe access to Sheldon Park.

There is potential to develop open space in the western part of the Belfast area. It is possible that this could be undertaken along with other functions required for any future residential development, such as the provision of stormwater detention basins. There are also possibilities for creating walkways and cycle ways in this area that could aid the creation of an urban boundary to the west.

The population structure of Belfast shows that the area has a higher than average percentage of young families. It is likely that any further urban development will appeal to that group and, therefore, the recreational needs or requirements of this group should be taken into account in the provision of the open space network. The importance of accessible parks located short distances apart will become crucial as will safety issues in relation to routes to and within open spaces.

5.2 Improving Connectivity

Linking reserves along the major waterways (Styx River, Smacks Creek and Kaputone Stream) and the continued development of walkways and cycle ways may go some way to increasing the connectivity of the open space network. The greatest potential for this will be adjacent to the Katupone Stream and this will necessitate looking beyond the Belfast area and considering the entire Styx catchment. Developing this linkage should extend to linking Sheldon Park with Ouruhia Park. A linkage between these parks and Kaputone Stream could be created through the development of esplanade reserves south of Otukaikino Reserve.

If there was some means of providing a safe route across Main North Road, a further linkage could be made to the historic Belfast Oxidation Ponds. Given that the oxidation ponds provide an important utility role and that this area is already an important wildlife site, it could be further enhanced to cater for increased recreational use. This site could be linked into the Waimari walkway which leads to the Groynes. It may also be possible to link any new reserves on the western side to this walkway and additional branches to the walkway, thereby providing some linkages and connectivity between all of these open space areas.

Linking both sides of Belfast will require detailed consideration and design work, especially where linkages would be crossed by significant transportation obstacles such as the railway line, Main North Road and the proposed Northern Bypass.

5.3 Reinforcing the character of Belfast

A strong desire was expressed by the community to reinforce and ensure that Belfast is developed in a manner that retains its sense of isolated urban amenity from the remainder of Christchurch. In addition, there was a community desire to preserve existing landscape character and develop a green belt surrounding Belfast.

One means of achieving this, is to develop gateways or sign posts to Belfast, not only at the main focal points of entering Belfast from the motorway, or crossing the Styx Mill Bridge, but also creating distinctive village legibility in between.

For Belfast, the two significant gateways are the Styx Rail overbridge and the intersection of Dickeys Road and Main North Road. It is recommended that open space in these areas be enhanced to promote the local “green gap” or “green belt” that separates Belfast from the remainder of the district. For the area to the South, by the Styx Road overbridge, it will be important to insignificantly develop the reserve, probably through the promotion of a wide esplanade reserve along this portion of the lower Styx River which is visible from the railway line and Main North Road.

5.4 Walkways and Cycle ways

One of the major issues in relation to the provision of walkways and cycle ways in Belfast is the ability to connect the two sides of the suburb.

As identified in Greenaway (2003), there are only limited walking opportunities along the Styx River and its tributaries. There are also few opportunities for cycling in the area, with the Bottle Lake Forest being the closest and most used area.

Various stakeholder groups have proposed that a pedestrian bridge be constructed across Main North Road to facilitate access to recreational resources on both sides of the road. The most obvious walkway sites are around the waterways, which could potentially be linked into the existing reserves such as Sheldon Park and Englefield Reserve. It is also important that there is a range of different lengths of walkway, from short circuits for smaller children and elderly to longer circuits for running and longer walks.

5.5 Community Recreation Facilities

Current research and community consultation shows there is a huge need for the development of a multipurpose recreation facility in the area. This facility needs to have spaces that are adaptable to a variety of use and cater to a variety of age groups. As the Belfast area continues to increase in size, it is important that community has a place where they can connect and recreate. Currently many of the Northwood residents do not see themselves as part of Belfast and a centralised recreation facility may help to promote a greater sense of community in the area.

5.6 Community consultation and needs analysis

Ongoing community consultation and monitoring will be required to determine whether existing provision is meeting the needs of Belfast residents and to identify any deficiencies in terms of provision. This is particularly important considering the expected population growth in the area.

5.7 Special populations

Open space and community facility provision should cater for the needs of the most vulnerable groups in Belfast. These generally include the elderly and youth. Targeted provision should be used to ensure that the needs of these groups are well-catered for as Belfast continues to develop.

5.8 Educational centres and libraries

As Belfast grows, there will be an increasing need to provide for the education needs of Belfast residents. There may also be sufficient growth to consider the possible provision of a new library facility if the population expands sufficiently.

5.9 Community building

Open space and community facility provision should be used as a basis for increasing community integration as Belfast continues to develop. In particular, there is a need to improve the connection between old and new areas of Belfast. At present, a number of new subdivisions are relatively insulated from the wider community, and some residents consider themselves to be living in separate communities. This type of dichotomy within a single area is likely to create a fractious relationship between residents in different parts of Belfast.

6.0 OPPORTUNITIES

6.1 Recreation Reserves

Population estimates that show an increase in the resident population of 9,511 suggest that there will be a requirement for approximately 19 hectares of new recreation reserves within the Belfast Area.

As previously discussed, the majority of the recreation reserves are located in central Belfast, focused around Sheldon Park. With the increase in residential development and the assumption that many of the residents will be families, it will be necessary to have sufficient parks for recreation. Sheldon Park is already a focus in the area for much of the recreational activity and undeveloped land exists to the east, across the Main North rail corridor. Therefore, the potential exists to identify the required land and ensure that the extension can be undertaken for the future. This will be all the more important if further residential development is undertaken to the east of the railway line. An extension of Sheldon Park of seven hectares has been identified and is likely to meet the recreation requirements of the eastern part of Belfast.

Approximately 5.6 hectares of recreation land is required on the other side of Belfast where the Devondale/Applefields development is likely to provide homes for approximately 2,800 people. An extended reserve at Sheldon Park will not meet this need, due to the distance between the residents and the park, and the major obstacle of the Main North Road that runs between the two parts of the Belfast Area.

It will be important to ensure that with consultation with a number of sport and recreation groups is undertaken to determine the exact requirements and functionality of any new active recreational reserve extensions and developments.

6.2 Neighbourhood parks

Small neighbourhood parks will be required within the Devondale/Applefield area as residential development continues. It is important that these parks are readily accessible within this neighbourhood and situated in appropriate locations. It is also possible that these areas could be co-ordinated with walkways, cycle ways and the development of stormwater treatment areas.

There is also a requirement to develop a neighbourhood park to the east of the railway line. Again, these can connect with the development of esplanade reserves, walkways and cycle ways throughout the wider area.

In the existing residential area of Belfast, there are a number of small neighbourhood parks. Most of these parks are isolated from one another. It is suggested that a priority should be to link these areas together as much as possible. It is acknowledged that the potential for the linking of existing parks will be very limited, and is most likely to occur in terms of trying to link to future walkways, cycle ways or the waterways wherever possible.

Greater potential exists to link the future small parks, by ensuring there are cycle routes and walkways to and from them, and linkages to other community services. Between Main North Road and the main rail line, for example, parks can be linked with Kaputone Stream and the Styx River and developed to complement conservation reserves and larger parks.

6.3 Conservation Reserves

There is great potential to create a chain of conservation reserves along the Kaputone and Styx Rivers, to expand of the Otukaikino Reserve and the Styx Conservation Reserve, and to enhance and develop the Belfast Oxidation Ponds. There is still some uncertainty, however, regarding the potential impact of the proposed Western Bypass on the oxidation ponds.

In the Devondale/Applefields area, there are limited possibilities in terms of existing natural areas; however, existing land features and artificial waterways may be able to be enhanced and new areas of significant habitat developed.

There is potential for the development of multipurpose reserves in relation to stormwater soakage areas and there may be the possibility of combining these with other recreational areas, walkways and cycle ways.

6.4 Cycle ways and walkways

At present, there is a very poor provision for cyclists (both commuting and recreational), either along roads or on designated cycle routes. An aim of future development should be to provide cycling amenities for different ages and abilities. For this reason, it is suggested that a range of short and long cycling routes be developed in the area to cater for a range of cycling experiences. Cycle ways should aim to link with networks beyond the Belfast area.

Some walkways are closely aligned with cycle ways and parks, but many others are separate. Again, an aim of future develop should be to connect the reserves and provide a range of enjoyable walking routes that cater for different abilities. In particular, circular walkways may be particularly useful.

6.5 Linkages

Linkages between walkways, cycle ways, recreation and conservation parks, and other community areas should be developed in consultation with the community and in new developments at the time of design. Linkages may be physical such as walkways, or purely visual, for example a line of trees or waterway.

Major issues arise particularly with physical linkages due to the cutting of the area by major arterial roads, and creative solutions to allow the passage of people will be required. This will be vital if the area is to maintain and continue to develop a unique character and rural village feel that the residents desire.

6.6 Maintaining the Boundaries of the Belfast Area

It is suggested that one of the ways in which the rural village character of Belfast could be maintained is through the development of wide esplanade reserves to form a green path along the waterways which in turn could form the boundaries of the area.

7.0 PRIORITIES

Development within and surrounding Belfast is occurring at a rapid pace. Therefore, the identification of linkages and the acquisition of land for reserves need to be undertaken in the near future, before opportunities are lost. Figure 8.1 identifies a possible priority list, which is based on the potential timing of the development of various land areas.

7.1 Priority 1: Devondale/Applefields Area

A comprehensive plan is required for the Devondale/Applefields area. This is an area that has no recreational facilities at present and is the largest single area of development. It is isolated from the rest of Belfast by the Main North Road. Therefore, the existing parks in the Belfast area are not easily accessible.

District parks and any walkways and cycle ways that need to be developed should be identified at this time.

In addition, areas and methods of stormwater treatment will need to be developed and these may be able to be designed to incorporate some recreational areas.

7.2 Priority 2: Styx North Development

Ensure that esplanade reserves of a substantial width are obtained along the Styx River and that a walkway link is developed between the Styx River and Kaputone Stream. This will allow for the development of a short circular walkway between the two waterways and Sheldon Park.

7.3 Priority 3: Waterway Protection with PPCS

Start negotiation to develop the best process to obtain protection for the Kaputone Stream, its margins and any associated springs, with PPCS meat works, before land uses change.

7.4 Priority 4: North Radcliffe

Develop esplanade reserves on Kaputone Stream and establish a link with Styx River. Ensure there are sufficient neighbourhood parks within this area.

7.5 Priority 5: Development of PPCS Land

Continue with development of recreation areas required within these areas and linkages with other surrounding areas and Sheldon Park. Ensure there is potential to increase the size of Sheldon Park to cope with future requirements.

7.6 Priority 6: Development of Otukaikino Wetland

Determine the feasibility of protecting the land south of the reserved wetland to increase the overall area of wetland and potentially enhance the naturalised walkway experience in this locality.

7.7 Priority 7: Linkages with other areas and regional parks

Identify methods for enhancing linkages with reserves and open spaces beyond the Belfast area to add value to regional parks. This includes linkages with, for example, a Waimakariri River Regional Park and other riparian reserves within the Styx River catchment.

Estimate the desire for a continuous reserve along the waterways and determine the mechanisms to use along each stretch. This may, for example, include the use of acquisition, conservation covenants and esplanade reserve provisions. If these reserves are also seen as a citywide resource, funding options may vary.

Identify cycle way and walkway routes throughout the area, and identify the best crossing points on major roads and the railway. Initiate these projects with other areas of development such as roading, and with other organisations, such as Transit NZ and TransRail.

Identify requirements of cycle ways and walkways and ensure they can be accommodated in development of recreational and conservation reserves without reducing the values of these reserves.

Begin or continue consultation with the Department of Conservation, landowners and the Christchurch City Council in relation to managing and enhancing and extending Otukakino Reserve, developing Belfast Oxidation Ponds, and riparian conservation values.

8.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Area Plan process provides an opportunity to enhance and develop the open space and recreation network in Belfast for the benefit of existing and future residents. Belfast is projected to experience significant population growth in the coming years which is likely to increase the demand for recreation and open space resources. The main issues relating to open space and recreation provision include a lack of accessibility to parks and reserves, a lack of connectivity between recreation and open space areas, a lack of walkway and cycle way provision, a need for more multipurpose parks and community facilities, and a desire to use open spaces to create a distinctive identity for the Belfast area. Many opportunities exist to enhance the recreation and open space network in Belfast, including purchasing land for the creation of new parks/reserves and to enhance linkages along major waterways, developing multipurpose reserves and

facilities, improving the walkway and cycle way network and enhancing the linkages between open spaces, and using open spaces and reserves to define the boundaries of the Belfast area.

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