

THE FUTURE OF BELL PARK

Background Information

Introduction

As part of the Valley Floor Review, Council has decided to consult with the community about the future of Bell Park in Gracefield. This statement provides background on the park, seeks input on current and possible future use and provides two scenarios for consideration.

Background

Bell Park is a recreation reserve, 15,500 m² in size (1.55 hectares), situated in the suburb of Waiwhetu. The park is bounded on all sides by housing with single-lane vehicular access off Bell Road and two pedestrian access points from Douglas Street and Riverside Drive South.



The park has traditionally been used as a sports ground, having been the home of the Lower Hutt City Association Football Club (the Club), prior to its move to Fraser Park in 2013. The park accommodated a single premier football pitch and an area for football training. The Club's building, which is on a separate legal title of 785 m², is sub-let by the Club to the Bellevue Boxing Club.

As a sports ground the park had limitations with the Club having to erect and maintain high nets at either end of the pitch to try and prevent the ball from being kicked over the fence into adjoining properties. In 2013 the Club relocated to Fraser Park and for the past three seasons the Park has not been used for football.

The introduction of artificial football turfs at Memorial and Fraser Parks has resulted in a reduced need for grass fields across the City. Accordingly Bell Park is not required for organised sports now or likely to be in the future.

If Bell Park is not required for the delivery of formal sports ground activities, then its use will be limited largely to being that of a neighbourhood reserve. A key question then is what would be a reasonable provision of open space to satisfy this local need, taking into account other nearby reserve land.

While there are no specific guidelines to determine what this provision should be, officers consider that the current area of just over 1.5 hectares for a local neighbourhood park is at the generous end of the scale. The New Zealand Recreation Association identifies 0.3 hectares as a minimum size required for a neighbourhood reserve, with most neighbourhood reserves being around 0.5 hectares in size.

The Waiwhetu Stream corridor and Bell Square are the closest other reserve land to Bell Park, being within 200 metres. There are also two school grounds within the immediate vicinity, which provide further open space within the suburb. Two large sports grounds at Te Whiti Park and Hutt Park, while being further away (between one and two kilometres), provide large open spaces for formal recreation north and south of Bell Park.

The layout of Bell Park, with it being almost fully enclosed by residential properties having high rear fences, results in a lack of public visibility, which is not desirable.

An independent assessment of the Park's reserve values has been undertaken in accordance with the criteria established by Council as part of the Reserves Strategic Directions 2016-2026. This assessment concludes that Bell Park has an overall **medium** level of reserve significance.

Current and Future Use

In reviewing the future of the Park, Council is interested in understanding how it is currently used (frequency and type of use), and to ascertain what other recreational uses the Park might host in the future. To this end a simple questionnaire has been developed and is attached as Appendix 1 to this document.

Options

Officers have identified two main options that Council could consider for the future of Bell Park. That is to;

- i. retain Bell Park as it currently exists; or
- ii. reduce the size of Bell Park.

The advantages of retaining Bell Park in its current state are:

- its value and potential as an open space is not diminished in any way;
- the status quo is retained for immediate neighbours; and
- it would provide greater flexibility to respond to unforeseen future recreational needs.

The advantages of reducing the size of Bell Park are:

- there will be an opportunity to improve visibility to the neighbourhood reserve and thereby improve public safety;
- the proceeds of the sale of that part of the Park not required for the neighbourhood reserve, would be available for other reserve development priorities, such as those identified in the Valley Floor Review; and
- making available the surplus part of the park for housing would help meet an expected future housing shortfall and be consistent with Council's Urban Growth Strategy.

Submissions

Written submissions may be posted or e-mailed to HCC.

Our online questionnaire is available at huttcity.govt.nz

E-mail address: submissions@huttcity.govt.nz

Postal submissions:

Bell Park Consultation
Hutt City Council
Private Bag 31912
LOWER HUTT 5040

Submissions close on **Friday 9 September 2017** and will be the subject of a report to Council, for which all submitters will be notified.