

## DISTRICT PLAN REVIEW – RESIDENTIAL CHAPTER 14

### SECTION 32 – APPENDIX 12

#### REPORT ON MINIMUM AREA FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PARKS

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#### **Summary**

Neighbourhood parks provide recreation opportunity and daily amenity for residential areas. Inherent to their design is provision of sufficient space to accommodate the features and opportunities needed to achieve their intended purpose i.e. space for children's play, informal games, large trees, amenity areas, and scope for passive and active recreation activities generally.

Minimum park size should ultimately be determined by policy / design function. However in order to achieve neighbourhood parks objectives certain standards need to be adhered to in order to reduce any adverse affects of park activities on adjoining properties in addition to achieving parks purposes. Boundary offsets are required for tree planting, and playground equipment. Space is required for a diversity of recreation activities and facilities, open space for sun, separation between activity areas and avoidance of nuisance to neighbours from recreation activities.

Some of the above are defined by standards in the Council's Infrastructure Design Guide and others by the professional experience of landscape and parks professionals working with subdivisions and parks design. Using minimum design constraints applied to a local park with a playground, several large trees and open space that allow sun and potential for passive recreation activities an area of 3000m<sup>2</sup> is an minimum and probably too small to achieve a reasonable range of more active recreation local park objectives. Larger areas are preferable, especially if facilities such as tennis courts and informal team recreation activities are included. Inclusion of larger open spaces for informal group games would require a space of approximately 5000m<sup>2</sup>.

#### **1. Introduction**

The following review examines minimum size requirements for Neighbourhood Parks. Neighbourhood Parks are just one component of an open space system which includes, pocket and civic parks, greenways, sports parks, adventure parks and natural or regional parks. The following quote from the New Zealand Recreation Association levels of service guidelines sums up the systems nature of open space planning and the need for diversity of recreation and environmental opportunity.

*"Parks do not exist in isolation; they are part of a wider network that is made up of a diversity of site types, sizes and settings. While total provision of parks within a community provides an indicator of the adequacy or otherwise of recreational open space for a given population, an equally important factor is the distribution and linkage of parks across the urban environment. Well balanced provision of the different types of parks land throughout the urban environment is critical to ensuring people have equitable access to a variety of recreation and open space experiences. Good distribution of parks is also critical in enhancing the landscape values of an urban area. The distribution of parks of varying size and style and the linking of these with corridors of green space provides an attractive environment and a greater sense of "liveability". It also assists with the movement of wildlife."* Page 30, New Zealand Recreation Association Parks Categories and Levels of Service Guideline June 2011

## **2. General purposes of Neighbourhood Parks**

1. To provide the amenity, healthy living opportunities and green open space needed to encourage and support higher density living in urban Christchurch District including:
  - Provision of green amenity oasis's in higher density areas as relief from and contrast with built form and hard surfacing.  
Note; LURP allows intensive development in inner residential areas of Christchurch
  - Space for large trees, amenity planting, community gardens, children's play and exercise opportunities especially where there is limited space in private gardens.
  - To compensate for loss of private green open space for recreation activities as urban infill progresses and residential density objectives promote higher residential density.
2. To provide open space nodes of sufficient size to fulfil neighbourhood recreation needs in greenfield and brownfield areas while not being dominated by one group (e.g. a playground with no other provision) as well as the growth of larger trees, amenity planting and space for community gatherings.
3. To establish and maintain Christchurch's Garden City character in existing and new urban areas, including protection of existing trees in new developments and protection of heritage places and structures.
4. To mitigate adverse environmental affects such as air pollution, allow for infiltration of storm water, enhance and protect waterways, landscape features and biodiversity.

## **3. Spatial requirements for Neighbourhood Parks**

National and International open space planning objectives provide a guide as to how much open space should be provided for local residential areas. The following examples of guidelines are from the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. The guidelines for neighbourhood type parks categorised above generally have sizes of at least 3000 - 7500m<sup>2</sup> to provide minimum recreation utility located 400-500m from residential properties.

<b>Relevant City, State and / or Organisation</b>	<b>Standards and goals which relate to the Christchurch Neighbourhood Park category</b>	<b>Notes / comments / criteria</b>	<b>Reference</b>
<b>Greater London</b>  (with intent to provide a best practice guide for the UK)	Small open space (under 2ha) < 400m distance  Local parks (2ha) 400m distance	These standards guide open space implementation in Greater London and provide a basis upon which other local authorities across the UK can develop their own standards.	'Open space strategies best practice guidance.' 2009  Published by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and the Greater London Authority.
<b>Victoria, Australia</b>  Parks and Leisure Australia and Seven	<b>Local or small local open space</b> within a small catchment 150 – 300m safe walking distance. Size	The Open Space Planning and Design Guide was commissioned by the Victorian/Tasmanian	Open Space Planning & Design Guide, Parks & Leisure Australia Vic/Tas August 2013

Municipalities in the Australian State of Victoria.  (best practice guide for Victoria, Australia)	usually less than 5000m <sup>2</sup> . minimum width of 30m desirable.  <b>Neighbourhood</b> open space for a single neighbourhood within 400m walking distance. Minimum size 7500m <sup>2</sup> - to 2 hectares.	Division of Parks and Leisure Australia (PLA), in partnership with the Victoria Department of Planning and Community.  A primary objective of the document is to provide sound, consistent policy across all local government to inform open space contributions through planning provisions at local level in Victoria.	
<b>New South Wales, Australia</b> (including Sydney),  (best practice guide for NSW local governments)	<b>Local Parks</b> 0.5-2 ha park within 400 m of most dwellings	The NSW default open space standards are based on a review of standards used elsewhere and a detailed analysis of current provision rates in Sydney's West Central sub-region.	'Recreation and open space planning guidelines for local government' 2010  Dept of Planning,  NSW Government
<b>NZ Recreation Association</b>  (best practice guide for New Zealand)	<b>Neighbourhood park:</b> within a ten minute walking distance or 500 metre radius of urban residential properties. The average useful size is considered to be from 3,000 to 5,000m <sup>2</sup>	Neighbourhood park is a developed urban park designed for use by the local residential community. Generally smaller in size, ranging from 1,000m <sup>2</sup> up to 2 hectares.	New Zealand Recreation Association  Parks Categories and Levels of Service, 2011
<b>United Nations</b>  (international target)	"Ensure that there is an accessible public park or recreational open space within half-a-kilometre of every city resident by 2015."	The United Nations has established a park and recreation open space target for urban areas.	United Nations Urban Environment Accord 2005, Action 10.

### 3.2 Activities appropriate for neighbourhood reserves and design constraints – Christchurch District

Activity requirements, design constraints including the need to separate activity areas, provide offsets from boundaries and paths and CEPTD requirements have a significant effect on park size in Christchurch. The Infrastructure Design Guide is the Council's technical compliance manual and sets out relevant standards for parks and other Council infrastructure. It has an important influence on the design of parks and strongly influences the park size required to achieve park objectives. It is referred to in Policy 8.2.2.3 of the draft subdivision chapter of the District Plan review.

Activity	Size Constraint	Comment
Passive recreation activity	None – but separation required to allow space for more active recreation opportunities such as exercise equipment.	Sufficient separation from adjoining residential areas is required to provide an environment conducive to enjoyment of the parks environmental qualities
Informal team ball games, Frisbees, ball throwing activities with children e.g. friendly game of touch football, kite flying.	Approximate size required around 50 x 50 m to enable informal games such as touch football. Separation required from residential boundaries, and other activity areas such as playgrounds. Approximately 5000m <sup>2</sup> would be required to fit these types of activities into a Neighbourhood Park and also provide trees, playgrounds and other facilities.	Need sufficient space to reduce balls entering neighbouring properties, being thrown against fences or interfering with other park activities.
Tennis Courts, half ball courts	Separation from other uses needed. These are only possible in larger Neighbourhood Parks of around 4-5000m <sup>2</sup>	Space is required for ball run out and interference with neighbours. Generally few neighbourhood parks provide tennis courts, however some of the newer subdivisions feature these as community assets.
Playgrounds	10m offset required from neighbouring boundaries. Playgrounds also require a fall out area where the safety under surfacing extends beyond the play equipment.	The standard is intended to reduce interference, oversight and noise disturbance to neighbours from play activities. Note play structures are often elevated and command views of surrounding properties.
Trees over 20 m height	20m offset from any property boundaries and 8m from an internal park cycleway or path (Christchurch City Infrastructure design Standard IDS 10-25)  Trees are expected to be able to grow	Large trees that are visible from a wider area are essential to provide the green Garden City character that Christchurch is well known for. As urban density increases parks will be one of the few available places with long term security of tenure and size

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Size Constraint</b>	<b>Comment</b>
	healthily for 50 years without unduly compromising services, safety or amenities, or causing unacceptable shading. The large trees that define urban Christchurch can eventually have a crown diameter of 18-20m+.	sufficient to accommodate trees in the city (street design, function and utilities make streets a more difficult place to establish and maintain trees long term). However trees are also potential sources of shade, leaf fall and root intrusion into private gardens so must be kept well away from boundaries.
Trees 8m+ height	6m offset from boundaries and cycleways or paths (Christchurch City Infrastructure design Standard IDS 10-25)	See comments above
Small Tree	4m offset from boundaries and cycleways or paths (Christchurch City Infrastructure design Standard IDS 10-25)	See comments above
Artworks	No specific size constraints	
Community gatherings, BBQs, performance, family picnics	Space required to avoid conflict with other activities.	Sufficient space to allow activities that don't unduly disturb neighbours.
Biodiversity requirements	Depends on extent of planting or protection required. A Council Public Open Space Strategy objective is to allow for 1ha patches of indigenous planting at 1 km intervals. This can only be accommodated in the very largest neighbourhood parks i.e. of at least 1.3 ha or in district parks.	Neighbourhood parks are one of the few places where patches of large growing native trees can be established at regular intervals across the city. The majority of these are evergreen so sufficient space is required to reduce shading over neighbouring properties.
Maintenance		Generally larger parks are less costly to maintain as they generally have larger ratios of grass to planted area.

### 3.3 Example of design constraints in practice.

The following example illustrates the constraints of boundary setbacks on an existing Christchurch Neighbourhood Park of around 3000m<sup>2</sup>. In this particular case where a playground, large trees and informal recreation area is illustrated 3000m<sup>2</sup> is too small. A Neighbourhood Park of around 3000m<sup>2</sup> is capable of supporting a playground, one or two large trees, smaller growing trees, amenity planting beds, seating, space for BBQs, and exercise equipment and an open sunny space with reasonable separation from adjoining neighbours. Inclusion of larger open spaces for informal group games would require a space of approximately 5000m<sup>2</sup>.

