

ASHHURST DOMAIN

DEVELOPMENT & MANAGEMENT PLAN

August 1997

(Reserve Management Plan under the Reserves Act 1977)

*The Ashhurst Domain Draft Development & Management Plan has been prepared
for Palmerston North City Council by LA4 Landscape Architects
and Dawson Leisure*

ASHHURST DOMAIN

MANAGEMENT PLAN 1997

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A. INTRODUCTION AND PLAN STRUCTURE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Ashhurst Domain is located in the Ashhurst township, 14 kilometres from Palmerston North. It is located at the confluence of the Manawatu and Pohangina Rivers, bounded to the north by the Wellington-Napier railway, to the south by SH3, and to the west by Cambridge Avenue.

The Ashhurst Domain covers an area of 54.6 hectares and is the largest single reserve owned by the Palmerston North City Council. The Domain is considered a reserve of regional significance and is used extensively by people from Palmerston North and the Manawatu as well as Ashhurst residents, particularly during the summer as a popular picnic area.

The Domain comprises two main landforms - an upper river terrace and a river floodplain separated by a steep cliff at the base of which is an old ox-bow lake now supporting a raupo wetland. The upper terrace area has been largely developed for a number of recreational uses. Sportsfields catering for cricket in summer and rugby and soccer in winter are the predominant organised sporting activities. The extensive sportsfields are primarily used as back-up grounds when fields in Palmerston North are too wet to play on.

Part of the upper area is leased to the Manawatu Canine Centre. The Ashhurst Cemetery is still in use and the camping ground provides basic facilities for campers. A cluster of buildings around the main entrance include the Manager's house and an office/information centre. An extensive play area and picnic area is established beneath the trees.

The lower floodplain area is divided into two main components - sixteen hectares is in pasture and grazed (currently leased) and the raupo wetland. Small pockets of totara/kawakawa are found on the floodplain with a larger four hectare remnant of indigenous vegetation rising from the river to the terrace.

Figure 1 : Location Map

Figure 2 : Ashhurst Domain - Landuse

1.1 DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Statutory Requirement

Reserve Management Plans are required to be prepared under the Reserves Act 1977 in order that the management body can outline its general intentions for use, enjoyment, maintenance, protection and preservation of its reserves.

As stated in section 41(3) of the Act:

'The management plan shall provide for and ensure the use, enjoyment, maintenance, protection, and preservation, as the case may require, and, to the extent that the administering body's resources permit, the development, as appropriate, of the reserve for the purposes for which it is classified.'

From this definition, three purposes of reserve management plans can be identified:

- (i). *'use and enjoyment'* implies an obligation for the City Council to identify the recreational needs of each community and then ascertain how our reserves can meet these needs.
- (ii). *'maintenance, protection and preservation'* implies that the City Council should ensure that existing reserves and recreational facilities are maintained to a standard partially determined by each community.
- (iii). *'development'* obviously requires the City Council to improve the provision and use of reserves throughout Palmerston North.

The aim of this legislation is to ensure that park management, development and enjoyment are based on sound principles and that, through involvement in the planning process, the needs of the public are clearly identified.

Purpose of the Reserve Management Plan

Reserves management plans are documents which establish a series of objectives and policies for the management and, where relevant, the development and use of individual parks and reserves. The process of preparing a management plan provides the public with opportunities to take part in the decision making which will affect the future of the reserve. The management plan process is shown overleaf. The plan, once adopted, is to be kept under continual review so that it may be adapted to changing circumstances, or in accordance with increased knowledge.

The purpose of the Ashhurst Domain Management Plan, therefore, is to provide for the protection, use, enjoyment, and maintenance of the reserve in keeping with the existing character of the area and within the limits of the resources available.

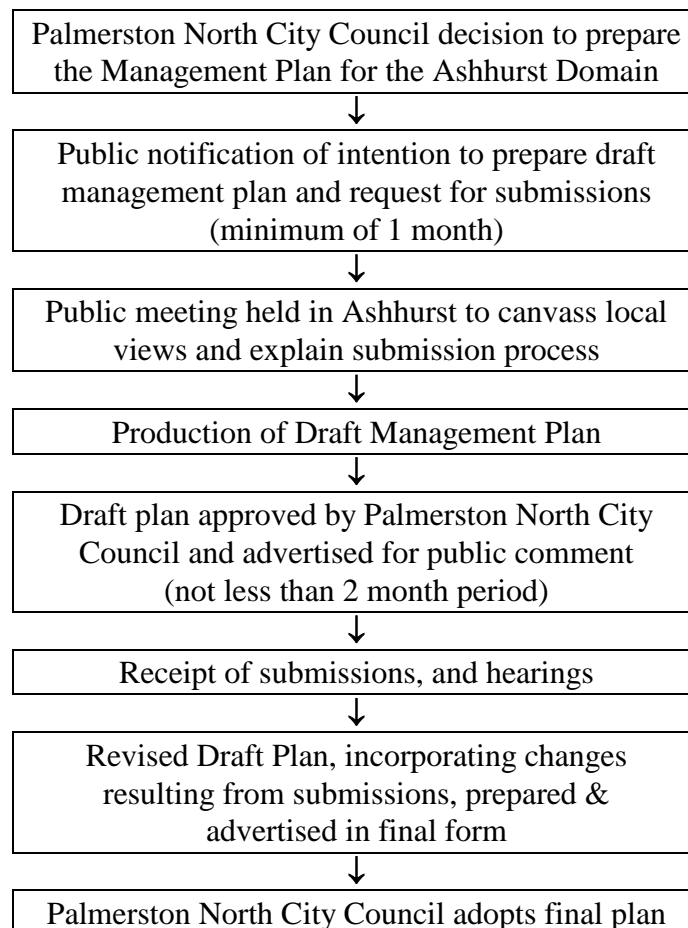
To achieve this purpose, the Plan:

- speeds up decision making by providing a common understanding in the community of how the reserve will be managed;
- simplifies administration by providing clear policy statements with regard to the reserve, which will encourage consistency in decision making;
- ensures that these decisions will take into account the broad public interest, rather than being made on an ad hoc basis;

- is clear about general intentions and attitudes while retaining the flexibility to deal with matters of detail on their individual merits within the general framework;
- provides a procedure for public involvement during its preparation and review; identifies the natural, spiritual, and cultural qualities of the reserve and ensures their protection;
- provides the means of resolving or minimising conflicts between users of the reserve;
- provides protection of iwi heritage values from ongoing demands.

1.2 THE MANAGEMENT PLAN PREPARATION PROCESS

The process that was followed in the production of this plan was in accordance with the provisions of the Reserves Act 1977. This has included public consultation. The steps involved in this process are shown below:



Notice of intention to prepare the Management Plan for Ashhurst Domain was advertised in June 1997. The public meeting was held on July 16th in the Ashhurst Village Valley Centre. The Draft Plan was advertised on 1 October and submissions closed on 1 December 1997.

2. COUNCIL'S RESERVES PLANNING STRUCTURE

The preparation of Reserve Management Plans is one of many mechanisms that Council uses to determine the future use and development of reserves. The diagram highlights the large number of Council processes that impact upon the development of reserves. The following plans have the greatest effect upon this process and their implications are outlined more fully under *Section 3 - Statutory and Legal Framework*.

- City Vision;
- Council's Strategic Plan;
- District Plan;
- Recreation Plan;
- Reserves Capital Development Programme;
- Reserve Management Plans;
- Annual Plan;

The City Vision - Palmerston North 1995-2015 outlines the direction of Palmerston North for the next 20 years and includes a series of desired outcomes that relate to recreation and leisure in the city.

The Strategic Plan for the City and Council (as well as the Recreation Needs Assessment) provide the overall direction for meeting recreation needs in the city and this direction impacts upon the objectives, policies and actions adopted in each Management Plan. The Strategic Plan outlines the actions the City Council will take to achieve the City Vision.

The District Plan together with the By-laws, provides the regulatory framework in which reserve development can take place. It provides rules and regulations that all development and activities must adhere to.

The Recreation Strategy identified the preparation of Reserve Management Plans as a high priority and when the next *Recreation Plan* is prepared, it will provide an overall philosophy on Council's role in the provision of recreational opportunities including reserve development.

Reserves Capital Development Programme

In July 1996 the Palmerston North City Council approved a 10 year Capital Development Programme relating to facility, walkway and amenity provision on reserves. This programme will be reviewed every 3 years and reprioritised according to community needs. The following items relate to Ashhurst Domain:

1997/98	Public Toilet provision	\$70,000
1998/99	Changing facility provision	\$280,000
2000/01	Loop track development	\$6,250

The *Reserve Management Plan* provides a direction for the development and use of each reserve for a five year period. It is a mechanism to help Council balance different reserve user needs but there is no guarantee that the actions in this Plan that require funding will be acted upon.

It is the *Annual Planning Process* that finally determines Council's actions and funding for any given year and it is through this process that Council balances the needs of reserve development (no matter how important) against other needs in the city.

3. STATUTORY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Ashhurst Domain is currently owned and administered by the Palmerston North City Council. The Domain has a total area of 54.6 hectares and its legal description is:

Lot 1 DP 52268
Lot 1 DP 55676
Pt Old River Bed SO 14675
Sec 1654 Town of Palmerston North
Sec 1684 Town of Palmerston North
Sec 1685 Town of Palmerston North
Sec 1686 Town of Palmerston North
Sec 1765 Town of Palmerston North

3.2 RESERVES ACT 1977

The Reserves Act 1977 is the primary piece of legislation under which this Management Plan is prepared.

Section 17(1) of the Reserves Act sets out the purpose of recreation reserves, which is to provide *“areas for the recreation and sporting activities and the physical welfare and enjoyment of the public, and for the protection of the natural environment and beauty of the countryside, with emphasis on the retention of open spaces and on outdoor recreational activities, including recreational tracks in the countryside”*.

Section 17(2) of the Act gives direction as to how recreation reserves should be administered having regard to the general purpose outlined above in subsection (1).

“...every recreation reserve shall be so administered under the appropriate provisions of this Act that...

- (a) The Public shall have freedom of entry and access to the reserve, subject to the specific powers conferred on the administering body by sections 53 and 54 of this Act, to any bylaws under this Act applying to the reserve, and to such conditions and restrictions as the administering body considers to be necessary for the protection and general wellbeing of the reserve and for the protection and control of the public using it:*
- (b) Where scenic, historic, archaeological, biological, geological, or other scientific features or indigenous flora or fauna or wildlife are present on the reserve, those features or that flora or fauna or wildlife shall be managed and protected to the extent compatible with the principal or primary purpose of the reserve provided that nothing in this subsection shall authorise the doing of anything with respect to fauna that would contravene any provision of the Wildlife Act 1953 or any regulations or Proclamation or notification under that Act, or the doing of anything with respect to archaeological features in any reserve that would contravene any provision of the Historic Places Act 1993:*

- (c) *Those qualities of the reserve which contribute to the pleasantness, harmony, and cohesion of the natural environment and to the better use and enjoyment of the reserve shall be conserved*
- (d) *To the extent compatible with the principal or primary purpose of the reserve, its value as a soil, water, and forest conservation area shall be maintained.*”

Section 41 of the Act states that a management plan for the reserve must be prepared and submitted to the Minister of Conservation for approval. The management plan:

“shall provide for and ensure the use, enjoyment, maintenance, protection, and preservation, as the case may require, and, to the extent that the administering body’s resources permit, the development as appropriate, of the reserve for the purposes for which it is Classified, and shall incorporate and ensure compliance with the principles set out in section 17... “

The Reserves Act contains provisions dealing with the management of reserves, and recreation reserves in particular, including:

- Preservation of trees and bush;
- Grants of rights of way and other easements;
- Use of reserves for telecommunications stations;
- General powers of the administering body (Palmerston North City Council);
- Leasing powers.

3.3 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT 1991

The Resource Management Act sets up a framework for the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. Palmerston North City Council, and the Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council, must work towards achieving the purpose of the Act, sustainable management, when exercising their powers and functions under that Act (for example when preparing district plans, regional policy statements and making decisions on resource consents).

3.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

This Management Plan must provide for the purpose of a reserve under the Reserves Act. However, the special nature of the Domain means that there are several layers of control under various pieces of legislation. For some activities, consents or permission will be required as follows:

- Resource consents under the Resource Management Act, and controlled by the District Plan and/or regional plans with consent required from Palmerston North City and/or the Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council;
- Permission from the administering body of the reserve (in this case the PNCC), and in some circumstances the Minister of Conservation, under the Reserves Act.

Each of these statutes or types of regulations is operating under different purposes and principles. In summary, although the Reserves Act contemplates the erection of structures and buildings for outdoor recreation, and gardens, picnic spaces, facilities and amenities, the District Plan regulates these activities.

3.5 PALMERSTON NORTH CITY DISTRICT PLAN

The District Plan sets out policies related to the overall provision of reserves and recognises the importance of open space with city wide objectives. In this plan, the majority of the Domain is zoned Recreation, with a smaller area zoned Conservation and Amenity. (*Refer to Appendix 7 : Proposed District Plan - Excerpts*).

Recreation Zone

Explanation:

The Recreation Zone provides for a wide range of recreational activities and covers the majority of the recreational space within the city. Although the primary function of the zone is to provide for active sport and recreation and community activities, some open spaces also display important conservation and visual amenity values.

The objectives for this zone are:

To enable the effective and efficient use and development of the open spaces within the Recreation Zone.

To protect the amenity values of adjacent residential areas.

Conservation and Amenity Zone

Explanation:

The Conservation and Amenity Zone covers those natural areas which have been identified as having high environmental values and which are generally in Council ownership. It includes areas of significant indigenous flora and fauna and important scenic areas. Through the institution of this zone, Council seeks to recognise and protect the values of these areas by restricting the range of activities and associated development permitted within the zone. The protection of the features and qualities of such high value environments provide significant benefits to the city as they constitute an integral yet diverse component of the city's recreation environment as well as contributing to its visual and amenity character.

The objective for this zone is:

To recognise and protect the City's conservation and amenity reserves.

Cultural Heritage Zone

The objective for this zone is:

To facilitate and enable the Tangata Whenua to exercise tino Rangatiratanga and Kaitiakitanga.

The Domain contains a scheduled Site of Cultural Heritage Value to Tangata Whenua as indicated in Appendix 17B of the District Plan and described as follows:

'An old urupa in bush near the Manawatu River containing about 6 graves unmarked. Rangitane people drowned when their canoe sank in the river about 1850's or 1860's.'

In addition, the indigenous bush remnant is scheduled, L49604 and 1686.

3.6 RESERVES BY-LAW 1968

The Palmerston North Reserves By-law (1968) deals with reserves and prohibited activities occurring within them.

3.7 PALMERSTON NORTH DOG CONTROL BYLAW 1997

The Palmerston North Dog Control Bylaw outlines public places in which dogs are to be prohibited or controlled on a leash, either generally or at specified times.

3.8 PALMERSTON NORTH CITY CEMETERY BYLAW

Other strategic and planning documents:

3.9 CITY VISION

The Palmerston North *'City Vision - Palmerston North 1995-2015'* outlines the direction of Palmerston North for the next 20 years and contains several goals and strategic outcomes relevant to the Ashhurst Domain.

Key Result Areas:

1. *Quality of Life for Residents*

Target: Quality and quantity of the City's 'green area' increase.
Target: Access to and use of our rivers and streams for recreation increases.
Target: Risks to the environment posed by pests, weeds and diseases are reduced.

4. *An Exciting and Attractive Cityscape*

Target: The use and satisfaction of outdoor public spaces is increased.

7. *Growth in the Range of Leisure Activities*

Target: There will be an increase in recreation and sporting opportunities.
Target: Use of facilities by users of the recreation ticket is increased.
Target: There are increased opportunities for both passive and active recreation.
Target: Recreational opportunities associated with the Manawatu River are increased'

The desired outcomes relate to ensuring access to a range of recreational activities, sports and games, walking and fitness.

3.10 PALMERSTON NORTH CITY STRATEGIC PLAN

Palmerston North City Council has produced a Strategic Plan for Palmerston North City. One of the six areas of Strategic Plan Focus identified is that of Recreation and Community Development:

'we will continue to play an active role in fostering and encouraging recreation and community development. We will also maintain a wide range of recreation and cultural facilities and encourage the wide use of them.'

The Strategic Plan also identifies Mission Statements for two recreation related significant activity areas.

Community Recreation

'The Council aims to develop accessible recreation opportunities which meet the diverse needs of the community and contribute to the viability of Palmerston North.'

Recreation and Community Facilities

'The Council's aim is to ensure sustainable maintenance and development of the City's recreation and community facilities at a level which will meet peoples needs.'

3.11 PALMERSTON NORTH CITY RECREATION STRATEGY

The Palmerston North City Council believes it is in the city's best interests to develop an environmental statement for recreation, especially in light of the limited natural resources around Palmerston North. The Recreation Strategy identifies the Ashhurst Domain wetlands as a sensitive environment to be managed to allow recreation use while conserving the resource.

The continuing provision of city reserves, including sportsgrounds, parks, gardens and walkways, will be determined by Council in accordance with the policy to be established under the Resource Management Act.

The Recreation Strategy identifies two visions:

Parks Management Vision:

'Palmerston North City Council acknowledges that it has the responsibility to provide parks, reserves, sports grounds and walkways throughout the city to the highest possible standard'

Environmental Vision:

'Palmerston North City Council acknowledges that all people shall have access to and opportunity for recreation in the natural environment. The Council recognises that the use and enhancement of natural and physical resources must be managed in such a way to ensure preservation, conservation and sustainable management of the environment.'

B. RESOURCE DESCRIPTION

4. HISTORY OF THE RESERVE

In 1864 the New Zealand Government purchased a large portion of land that is known as the 'Manchester Block' which was then sold in 1871 to the Colonists and Immigration Aid Corporation in England. The towns of Ashhurst, Halcombe and Fielding were planned for the block and Ashhurst became settled in the late 1870's. Ashhurst served as a base of operations for opening the fertile Pohangina Valley and by the turn of the century it was a well established town. The railway station was opened in 1892 and Ashhurst became the 'gateway' to the Pohangina Valley.

Historically the Domain was in three portions:

29.4793 hectares, consisting of the original Domain and cemetery, was initially Crown Land, administered by the Ashhurst Domain Board and the Cemetery Board. Later this was taken over by the Oroua County Council.

16.8555 hectares, originally the racecourse, was owned by the Ashhurst-Pohangina Racing Club from 1921 to 1979. This was then sold to the Oroua County Council with the Palmerston North City Council contributing half of the purchase price.

8.2858 hectares (adjacent to the railway line) was railway land leased to the Oroua County Council by New Zealand Railways. This was purchased by Palmerston North City Council in 1997.

The racecourse portion of the Domain was used by the Ashhurst Pohangina racing Club who held their first meeting in late 1891 and continued using the site until 1942. The racecourse was then used by the NZ Army between 1943 and 1945 as an army military camp during World War 2. In 1946 the Racing Club shifted to Awapuni but the track was used for a horse training centre until 1979. The former Palmerston North City Corporation and the Oroua County Council then developed the area into sportsfields. It has also been used as a horse training track, horse riding area, picnic area, grazing area and informally as a trailbike track.

5. NATURAL RESOURCES

5.1 LANDSCAPE IDENTITY AND CHARACTER

Landscape Character

The landscape character of Ashhurst Domain is predominantly that of expansive parkland, river terrace and floodplain, and native forest. The Domain's appeal lies in its combination of broad open spaces, intimate enclosed spaces, mature tree plantings, native forest, river setting, scenic views, naturalness and informal feel.

The Domain has four broad character areas - the upper river terrace, lower floodplain, native forest, and the interface between the forest and upper terrace. The location of these areas is indicated on *Figure 3 - Landscape Identity Areas*. Within these four areas are a number of separate landscape identity zones differentiated by enclosure and containment created by structural tree plantings; landforms; landuse; landscape elements; activities and circulation patterns.

Landscape Area 1 - Upper River Terrace

This area is characterised by the large scale open space containing the sportsfields with little vegetation except the mixed shrub and small tree shelter plantings adjoining SH3 and Cambridge Avenue. Shelter belt planting of eucalypt species dissect the space in an east-west orientation and mixed eucalypt and wattle plantings separate the area from the cliff edge to the lower floodplain. The area is the focus for organised sporting activities.

Exposure to the prevailing wind is a microclimatic feature of the area.

Landscape Area 2 - Amenity Area

Between the native forest area and upper terrace, this area is dominated by the mature tree framework of totara, pine, eucalypt and Kawakawa. Forming the focal point for the Domain this heavily used 'amenity' area contains the children's play area, picnic ground, cemetery, camping ground, main entrance, toilets, shelter, manager's house, office, and service yard.

The mature plantings provide containment, shelter and scale to the area adding to its wide appeal. Many sub-spaces are created by the trees providing multiple opportunities for large numbers of people to be accommodated in one area while still retaining autonomy.

Landscape Area 3 - Native Forest

The native forest is dominated by the dense vegetation, damp and wet microclimate created beneath the canopy, and reduced light levels. The wetland/stream on the lower level is a natural feature providing interest. The area is very sheltered and pedestrian access is provided by informal clay/gravel paths meandering throughout the forest.

Figure 3 : Landscape Identity Areas
Landscape Area 4 - River Floodplain

The lower river floodplain is dominated by the wetland/ox-bow lake, native bush, and the more open grazed area. The cliffs and the river strongly define the space, with the cliffs providing dramatic enclosure and shelter from the prevailing wind. The wetland is an environmentally significant resource and due to the rampant raupo growth creates a major physical barrier to the cliff edge. The height of the cliff face is exaggerated by the mature pine and eucalypt trees growing on the upper edge. The lower area is susceptible to flooding and predominantly dry due to the nature of the river soils. The area is not heavily used by the public due to its inaccessibility, fenced off grazed areas and lack of public amenities. It is the closest point to the river and the vehicular track adjacent provides good pedestrian access to the water and banks.

5.2 VEGETATION

Domain Planting Structure

The existing planting structure in the Domain is characterised by:

1. Totara / kawakawa forest;
2. Titoki / kawakawa forest;
3. Matai / totara forest;
4. White pine and maire;
5. Pasture and grasses;
6. Raupo reedland on wetlands;
7. Eucalyptus shelter belts;
8. Amenity tree and shrub plantings.

Refer to *Figure 4: Vegetation* and *Appendix 2: List of the Flora of the Ashhurst Domain*.

The dominant plant species in the Domain is the *Macropiper excelsum* (Kawakawa) and is widespread throughout the forest area and on the floodplain. *Dacrycarpus dacrydioides* (Kahikatea) are present in the wetland area of the main bush, numbering approximately 25. The forest is largely characterised by *Macropiper excelsum* (Kawakawa), *Myrsine australis* (Mapou), *Hedycarya arborea* (Pigeonwood), *Laurelia novae-zealandiae* (Pukatea), *Brachyglottis repanda* (Rangiora), *Beilschmiedia tawa* (Tawa), and *Alectryon excelsus* (Titoki).

The Ashhurst Domain forest supports numerous trees, shrubs, vines, ferns and mosses. Beneath the high forest canopy smaller trees, tree ferns and tall shrubs make up the secondary layers in the forest, with seedlings, ferns, mosses and liverworts growing on the forest floor. *Lianes* (climbing plants) and *epiphytes* (perching plants) hang from the trunks and branches of the larger trees - characteristic of New Zealand forests.

The forest wetland area supports a large population of duckweed. The raupo reedland is well established in the old ox-bow lake at the base of the cliffs. *Adiantum formosum*, the rare giant maidenhair fern which grows naturally only around the Manawatu Gorge area, has established itself on the forest floor.

Introduced noxious plants are having a detrimental effect on the indigenous forest.

To date elderberry, tradescantia, blackberry, barberry, hawthorn, broom, Jerusalem cherry, and the vines - old man's beard, ivy, Japanese honeysuckle

and convolvulus created problems. Old man's beard and Japanese honeysuckle are now under control, but tradescantia is threatening natural regeneration by smothering most young seedlings through its dense matting habit.

Self sown wattle seedlings are causing problems in the cliff and could create a serious instability problem if not controlled and removed.

5.3 CLIMATE

The climate consists of moderate temperatures, moderate reliable rainfall, and moderate sunshine. The prevailing wind is west-southwest and is considerable. The mean annual temperature and rainfall are around 13 degrees celsius and 1000mm respectively with low humidity levels.

5.4 FAUNA

There is a comparatively large number of bird species in the Domain including fourteen native and nine introduced species. The population size of each is relatively low however since the introduction of predatory cats, ferrets, rats, hedgehogs and stoats. The most common birds are the fantail, goldfinch, blackbird and rock pigeon. Pukeko are present throughout the lower wetland area. Skinks and geckos inhabit the bush area along with the whistling tree frog, hedgehogs, mice, ship rats, ferrets and stoats. The ferrets and stoats are a serious threat to other wildlife. Possums and feral cats have been sighted within the Domain.

Seven species of native fish are present in the waters in and around the Domain including the brown mudfish. Introduced brown trout, and the occasional rainbow trout, are found in the Manawatu River. The native long-finned and short-finned freshwater eels are found in the Domain waters. Numerous invertebrates including worms, spiders, millipedes, slaters, snails, caterpillars, beetles and weevils inhabit the forest floor.

A comprehensive list of fauna is contained within *Appendix 2: List of Fauna of the Ashhurst Domain*.

5.5 ANIMAL PESTS

A number of animal pests inhabit the Domain including rabbits, possums, feral cats, rodents, ferrets and stoats. The ferrets and stoats are a serious threat to the bird population - preying on the eggs and young.

Figure 4 : Vegetation

6. RESOURCE USE

6.1 RECREATION

6.1.1 General

Many demands are made on the Domain for numerous recreational activities due to its close proximity to Palmerston North and the wide variety of recreational opportunities available.

Users of the Domain include:

The local Ashhurst community using the Domain on a day to day basis for walking, walking their dogs, visiting the cemetery, bush walking, jogging, swimming in the river and exploring the forest.

Sports groups using the playing fields - the playing fields are used for cricket in summer and three soccer and three rugby fields in winter. The playing fields have a number of demands placed on them due to their good drainage allowing use through occasions during the winter months when Palmerston North fields are closed.

Large organised groups using the picnic facilities - these users normally consist of large sport, community or work groups and can number between fifty to five hundred on any one day during the summer months, particularly during December and January.

Camping ground users - due to the limited facilities offered this user group is not large, nevertheless they represent a group with potential management issues.

Casual users - these users are normally family groups often from Palmerston North or Ashhurst using the Domain facilities

The varied character of the reserve provides an ideal setting for these pursuits. For most part these activities have minimal impact on the reserve and cause little damage.

Feedback from users indicated that the Domain's attractions lie in its naturalness, peace and quiet, native forest area, playground, wide open spaces, good playing surfaces, closeness to the city and generally informal nature. The main negative aspects were the lack of adequate toilet and changing room/shower facilities and rough entrance. Most requested that the Domain remain as is, without too much further development to spoil its natural character.

6.1.2 Casual Recreation

A number of casual recreational uses occur within the Domain:

- *Walking;*
- *Bush walks;*
- *Picnicking;*
- *Camping;*
- *Cemetery visits;*
- *Wildlife observation;*
- *Nature studies;*
- *Dog exercising;*
- *Dog shows.*

6.1.3 Active Recreation

The majority of active recreational pursuits occurring within the Domain occur on the sportsfields, formed paths and tracks and the flat grassy areas.

- *Rugby;*
- *Soccer;*
- *Cricket;*
- *Rugby League;*
- *Jogging;*
- *Power walking;*
- *Ball games;*
- *Children's play;*
- *Fitness training;*
- *Kite flying;*
- *Cycling;*
- *Mountain biking;*
- *Archery;*
- *Orienteering;*
- *Water based activities - canoeing, swimming and fishing.*

6.2 CEMETERY

The Ashhurst cemetery is adjacent to the camping ground and consists of an older section with full graves and headstones, and a more recent area with headstones only set into the grass. An RSA section is located towards the eastern end. The cemetery is still used and is administered by the Palmerston North City Council.

6.3 CAMPING GROUND

A small camping ground is situated under the totara trees and provides low-key facilities for informal camping. Twelve power points are available for caravans and campervans and tent space is located in the immediate vicinity. Toilet facilities are shared with other park users. One shower is present but no kitchen facilities are provided. The area is popular over the summer months with a number of people returning year after year.

6.4 CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

A children's adventure-type playground is sited amongst the mature trees at the edge of the native forest, inside the SH3 entrance (*Figure 2 - Landuse*). It was developed in a number of stages and completed in 1993 and has proven extremely popular.

There are three separate areas catering for different age-groups. Play equipment includes four modular structures comprising climbing equipment, platforms, ladders, slides, tunnels, pommels and swings. A large flying fox and a rope swing provide challenging activities.

Associated facilities include toilets, picnic tables, seats, bins, picnic shelter, grassed areas and shade trees.

6.5 GRAZING

Two areas of the Domain are leased for grazing. 7.3 hectares of the upper terrace north of the sportsfields is fenced off, and 8.1 hectares of the lower floodplain is grazed with both sheep and cattle.

6.6 VEHICULAR ACCESS

The main vehicular access to the Domain is off SH3. The metalled road provides public access to the picnic area, cemetery, play area and camping ground. Access to the sportsfields car park is gained off Cambridge Avenue. A metalled driveway extends along the northern boundary adjacent to the railway providing access to the Manawatu Canine Centre.

A metalled service access road extends along the top of the cliff, before cutting through it onto the lower flood plain. A similar service vehicle track runs along the river edge giving river access.

6.7 PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

There is pedestrian access to the Domain from Cambridge Avenue and SH3. Access within the Domain is generally over the grassed areas, with few formed footpaths as such existing. Informal access tracks meander through the native forest, and the metalled driveways provide good access. Pedestrians have free access to all parts of the reserve except the two areas leased for grazing which are fenced.

6.8 BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES

There are a number of buildings and facilities throughout the Domain providing for both the day to day maintenance of the reserve, for the convenience comfort and safety of the users, and for recreational use.

6.8.1 Drummond Cottage

Drummond Cottage is a small wooden building with an iron roof between the camping ground and the cemetery and was originally used as the Sexton's Cottage. Over the years it has slowly deteriorated, but still remains a solidly built structure with original features intact. Past options for the building have included removal off-site or upgrade and renovation. It is currently being used as a changing shed for soccer players.

6.8.2 Manawatu Canine Centre

A section of the Domain has been used by the Manawatu Canine Centre since 1988. A clubhouse was moved onto the site and is a well maintained building. The Canine Centre's activities are compatible with other users of the Domain and the grounds are kept in a neat and tidy condition.

6.8.3 Information/Office Building

Adjacent to the main entry drive is the information/office building. This small modular construction building serves both as an information office when staffed, and as the main working office for the Domain. An information board on the outer wall provides visitors with basic information regarding the Domain.

6.8.4 Manager's House

A wooden bungalow, off the main entrance drive, is utilised as the Domain Manager's house. This building is well maintained and partially screened from view by trees and shrubs planted alongside the drive. The garage is highly visible however, being in the line of sight of the main drive.

6.8.5 Toilets

A toilet block is located beneath the trees beside the picnic area. Built of rusticated timber board and batten it is visually unobtrusive, blending well into its surrounds. The facility provides for male, female and disabled park users, and also contains a small storage room. The limited facilities are under extreme pressure during weekends and holiday periods and are insufficient to cope with the increased demand. New toilets are to be constructed adjacent to the sportsfields during the 1997/98 financial year.

6.8.6 Picnic Shelter


Adjacent to the picnic area is a wooden semi-enclosed picnic shelter. This building provides shelter and shade and contains several picnic tables and undercover seating.

6.8.7 Other Buildings

An area to the rear of the manager's house has been set aside for storage and implement sheds which accommodate equipment and facilities which are essential to the maintenance of the Domain. A woodshed and stockyards used by the grazier are located near the eastern boundary of the Domain.

6.9 ADJOINING LAND USE

Land use to the south of the reserve across SH3 is a mixture of residential properties facing onto SH3 with horticultural uses behind. Adjacent land to the west/northwest beyond Cambridge Avenue is similarly residential. The Wellington to Napier railway extends along the northeast boundary separating the reserve from the adjoining residential properties and Conservation and Amenity zoned land.



7. ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

7.1 MANAGEMENT OF THE DOMAIN

The Domain is managed by the Palmerston North City Council with the help of two full-time overseers, one of which lives in the Manager's house on site.

Prior to 1988, the Domain was controlled by the Oroua County Council and administered by the Ashhurst Domain Management Committee comprising representatives of the Oroua County Council, Palmerston North City Council and the Ashhurst District Community Council. In 1988 Oroua County Council passed over the running of the Domain to the Palmerston North City Council.

Funding is allocated as part of the Annual Planning process within Council.

The Services and Facilities Unit is responsible for collecting leases and rents from buildings, such as the Canine Centre, and is responsible for building management. It also collects leases from grazing, and is responsible for day to day land management.

7.2 LEASES AND LICENCES

The Reserves Act 1977 provides for leases, licences and easements to be granted over the Domain for certain purposes. There are several over different parts of the Domain. These are:

Two parcels of land are leased for grazing - 8.1 hectares on the lower flood plain is subject to a three yearly lease commencing 1 July 1991, and 7.3 hectares on the upper terrace subject to a month to month lease commencing on 1 July 1991.

The tenant is responsible for the fencing and maintenance of all the boundaries and for keeping the areas free of noxious weeds.

1.7 hectares of the upper terrace is leased to the Manawatu Canine Centre Incorporated, for the erection and use of Club Rooms, showrings and associated canine activities, for a term of twenty one years commencing on 9 March 1988.

D. MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

8. OBJECTIVES OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 8.1.1 *To maintain, facilitate and further promote the informal and organised outdoor recreational use of the Domain by the general public.*
- 8.1.2 *To balance the interest of present and future recreational users with that of local residents, lessees and others with vested or sectional interests in the Domain.*
- 8.1.3 *To encourage use of the Domain as an educational resource.*
- 8.1.4 *To ensure that the use of the Domain is consistent with the variety of relevant regulations to enable safe and appropriate recreational opportunities.*
- 8.1.5 *To protect and enhance the natural environment and character of the Domain.*
- 8.1.6 *To encourage the integrated management and development of the Domain.*

These objectives will be implemented by policies and actions on the following matters:

- Management ;
- Landscape;
- Vegetation;
- Fauna;
- Wetland;
- Recreation;
- Camping Ground;
- Children's Playground;
- Cemetery;
- Access;
- Walkway;
- Car Parking;
- Public Events;
- Interpretation and Education;
- Buildings and facilities;
- Leases;
- Site Furniture and Signage;
- Erosion;
- Grazing;
- Animal pests;
- Dogs;

9. POLICIES

9.1 ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

Explanation:

The primary management goal is to achieve the objectives of the Management Plan under the provisions of the Reserves Act 1977. The reserve is already gazetted under this legislation. Ashhurst Domain is an important recreational open space providing facilities for a wide range of users.

Policy 9.1.1

To manage the Domain under the provisions of the Reserves Act 1977 while recognising and giving effect to the status and position of the tangata whenua.

Implementation:

1. Manage the Domain for the enhancement of the environment and enjoyment of both organised and informal recreation use.
2. Monitor compliance with the conditions of any leases granted on the Domain.
3. Monitor the level of recreational activity and use on the reserve.
4. Review the management plan as necessary over time.
5. Undertake consultation with tangata whenua.

9.2 LANDSCAPE

Explanation:

Four landscape identity areas have been identified in the Domain, defined by distinctive visual/physical elements that clearly separate the identity of one area from another - upper river terrace, amenity area, native forest and river floodplain. These are fully described under section 5.1 *Landscape Identity and Character* and as shown (*Figure 3 - Landscape Identity Areas*).

Visual management policies relate to a level of permitted development in a particular character area. The impact of a permitted activity in the Domain should be restricted as far as practicable to within an appropriate identity area to protect the landscape integrity of an adjacent character area.

Policy 9.2.1

To protect and enhance the landscape character and visual amenity of the Domain.

Policy 9.2.2

To manage the landscape of the Domain in accordance with the policies shown on Figure 3 - Landscape Identity Areas.

Implementation:

- 1. Preservation Policy:**
Undertake landscape management in these areas that is consistent only with the preservation and enhancement of the natural landscape qualities.
- 2. Modification Policy:**
Management and public use activities may dominate the original landscape character.
- 3. Retention Policy:**
Retain and enhance the natural landscape character in any management and public use activity.

9.3 VEGETATION

Explanation:

The Domain contains numerous plantings of mature specimen trees, mixed native tree and shrub plantings, shelter belt plantings and two extensive areas of native forest with their associated understorey plantings of shrubs, vines, ferns and mosses. Vegetation management within the Domain is an important component of the day to day management of the reserve.

Policy 9.3.1

To manage and maintain the vegetation within the Domain to enhance the natural character of the environment, facilitate opportunities for ecological habitats and wildlife, and for visual amenity.

Policy 9.3.2

To manage the indigenous forest to maintain and strengthen its botanical and visual integrity and viability.

Policy 9.3.3

To incorporate only ecologically and genetically appropriate plant stock in future plantings within and adjacent to the indigenous forest.

Implementation:

1. Preserve and protect the indigenous vegetation forest through recognised and appropriate arboricultural methods of care, maintenance, and regeneration.

2. Carry out a controlled programme to eradicate the *Pinus radiata* from the indigenous forest area and replace with indigenous species.
3. Ensure that all new plantings of indigenous vegetation are of stock that has been propagated from plants that have evolved genetically in the Manawatu ecological district.
4. Regularly inspect existing trees and shrubs and if necessary carry out surgery in order to improve their health, appearance or safety.
5. Remove and replace any existing trees throughout the Domain which have died back, been seriously damaged or are dangerous.
6. Remove and control noxious plants.
7. Carry out eradication of environmental weeds using appropriate measures (eg. management regimes, hand weeding, use of herbicide) and promote research on this to prevent further infestations.
8. Maintain and enhance the diversity of wildlife through the establishment, enhancement and preservation of suitable natural habitats.

9.4 FAUNA

Explanation:

The Domain is home to over 25 native species of birds, animals and fish. It may once have supported a large and diverse indigenous fauna, however, destruction of habitat and the effects of introduced predators have greatly reduced this fauna and to some extent it has been replaced by introduced animals. Numerous native bird species are prevalent although the numbers of each is relatively low.

Wildlife contributes significantly to the ecological attribute of the resource and the users enjoyment and experience of it, and as such the preservation, creation and enhancement of wildlife habitats should be actively pursued.

Policy 9.4.1

To manage the Domain to provide for the needs of existing desirable fauna and to further create habitats which will attract additional indigenous species.

Policy 9.4.2

To manage and maintain the fauna within the Domain and to take all necessary measures to protect it from predators.

Implementation:

1. Preserve and protect the indigenous vegetation forest as a habitat for indigenous fauna.
2. Carry out the eradication of animal pests using safe, proven methods and investigate methods to prevent further infestations.

3. Monitor and if necessary control the populations of other introduced fauna that may threaten the vegetation and indigenous fauna.
4. Maintain and enhance the diversity of wildlife through the establishment, enhancement and preservation of suitable natural habitats.

9.5 WETLAND

Explanation:

The Domain contains the only ox bow in the Pohangina system and is of significant natural value. The wetland area has degenerated more rapidly than is usual in part due to silting up, caused in part by debris falling into it from the surrounding cliff. Actions need to be taken to impede the natural process of reverting to dryland.

Policy 9.5.1

To manage and enhance the wetland area of the Domain to improve water quality, landscape and habitat values.

Implementation:

1. Consult with all interested parties regarding the future conservation and enhancement of the wetland area - eg. DOC, Forest and Bird Society, Ducks Unlimited, Fish and Game Council.
2. Dredge the wetland area to a depth of 1.5 metres to 2 metres in parts.
3. Introduce indigenous water plant species whilst retaining selected remnants of raupo to provide habitat for existing species.
4. Extend the area of the northern indigenous bush to the wetland edge.
5. Encourage viewing of the wetland area from the adjacent cliffs.
6. Investigate and introduce cost effective methods of animal pest control.
7. Investigate shelter belt planting along the river edge to create a favourable microclimate.

9.6 RECREATION

Explanation:

Ashhurst Domain caters both for casual and unstructured recreational activities as well as organised active sports. The rural nature and open spaces of the Domain provide for a wide range of recreational activities which are compatible with its cultural heritage and landscape values. The landform and site layout of the reserve creates a natural division between active and casual recreational uses with organised sports being well suited to the Upper River Terrace. Low key informal pursuits such as walking and picnicking are complementary to the more natural areas of the Domain. The Domain is also important as a neighbourhood amenity for Ashhurst.

Policy 9.6.1

To maintain and encourage informal and casual unstructured recreational use of Ashhurst Domain compatible with its cultural heritage and landscape values.

Policy 9.6.2

To maintain and encourage active organised sporting use of the Ashhurst Domain compatible with its cultural heritage and landscape values.

Policy 9.6.3

To ensure that recreational activities do not adversely impact on the experience of the casual user and that they are compatible with the natural rural landscape of the Domain.

Policy 9.6.4

To assess all existing recreational activities taking place within the Domain against the specified criteria to determine whether the activity is appropriate.

Implementation:

1. Maintain and encourage organised sport activities as a priority within the Upper River Terrace identity area in the reserve.
2. Ensure that the existing recreational activities that currently take place are not detrimental to the reserve and assess all future proposals according to the following criteria:
 - the public benefit and value of the activity;
 - the protection of cultural heritage and landscape values;
 - the need for the particular activity to be held within the park;
 - the maintenance of the Domain's character and ambience;
 - the ability to meet all Palmerston North City Council bylaws;
 - the ability to meet the objectives and policies of this plan;

3. Maintain and encourage non-organised and informal recreational activities as a priority within the River Flood Plain, Amenity and Native Forest identity areas in the reserve.
4. All organised sports will be required to follow the Palmerston North City Council's sportsfields booking system.
5. Investigate and monitor the demand for additional sportsfields and if required progressively develop these on the paddocks north of the existing fields.
6. Notify (by means of signs, pamphlets or other material) all participants of detrimental activities of their prohibition, and offer alternative recreational venues for such activities if available - eg. mountain biking.
7. Provide and maintain a minimum of facilities for the health, safety and convenience of the recreational users.
8. Provide toilet, shower and changing facilities as demand requires.

9.7 PUBLIC EVENTS

Explanation:

The Domain is used for a wide range of public events from school and educational trips to company outings and picnics. Large scale public events can generally be well accommodated within the Domain but some conflicts can arise with increasing demands being placed on the facilities when multiples of large groups arrive at once. It is important to establish an acceptable balance between event use of the reserve and its availability for informal community use and enjoyment.

Policy 9.7.1

To allow large scale public events and gatherings of limited duration to be held in the Domain which are coordinated and approved by the Council.

Implementation:

1. Groups in excess of 50 people will be encouraged to book in advance on a first come basis and must adhere to Council's conditions.
2. Fun runs, organised walks and other community events authorised by Council will be encouraged to book in advance as outlined in (1) above.
3. All events are required to comply with any relevant Palmerston North City Council bylaws and legislation.

9.8 CAMPING GROUND

Explanation:

The existing camping ground provides low key facilities for informal camping at a minimal cost for users. It's attractive setting and proximity to the bush, river and children's playground adds to it's appeal. Minimal facilities are accepted for the low cost but additional facilities are required for it to run efficiently and for the comfort and convenience of the users.

Policy 9.8.1

To continue to provide low-key camping facilities within the Domain.

Implementation:

1. Investigate the provision of simple kitchen facilities in the short term.
2. Investigate the construction of a basic camping amenities block including kitchen, showers and toilet.
3. Ensure that the camping ground does not expand beyond the present boundaries.

9.9 CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND

Explanation:

The playground is a heavily used and complimentary asset to the Domain. The existing scale of development is considered to be in keeping with the overall size and function of the area. It is important that the playground be maintained to a high standard to comply with the safety regulations and in order to ensure that it does not detract from the natural beauty of the reserve.

Policy 9.9.1

To provide an up to date range of children's play equipment, designed in keeping with the natural environment, which conforms with NZS 5828 and AUS 1924 safety standards, and in accordance with Council's requirements under the Health and Safety Act.

Implementation:

1. All equipment and structures will be maintained in safe working order in accordance with current NZ Safety Standards.
2. All buildings, equipment and landscaped areas will be well maintained.
3. The existing mature Monterey pines will be removed from the playground.

9.10 CEMETERY

Explanation:

The Ashhurst cemetery is of great historical significance to the community with many of their ancestors and family members buried there. It is important that the cemetery is maintained to a high standard.

Policy 9.10.1

To continue to operate the cemetery at its present level of use and intensity.

Implementation:

1. No further extensions to the cemetery beyond the current boundaries will be permitted.
2. All headstones, graves and markers will be maintained to a high standard.
3. All hedges and paths within the cemetery boundaries will be maintained to a high standard.

9.11 ACCESS

Explanation:

Efficient access and circulation systems for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles with supporting infrastructure are critical to the successful use and management of the Domain. Fundamental to this are readily accessible and identifiable entry points, a logical pedestrian pathway network with unimpeded access, separate vehicular access with speed restrictions, and well integrated car parks where necessary and appropriate.

High volumes of traffic impede the free circulation of pedestrians, create noise and air pollution and destroy the aesthetic qualities of the Domain. While it is considered desirable for motorists to be able to gain access throughout the reserve for access and in order to enjoy the reserve, roading should not dominate the landscape.

Policy 9.11.1

To provide an efficient and safe access network within the Domain catering for a wide variety of users, with priority for pedestrian access.

Policy 9.11.2

To control the volume and speed of Domain traffic.

Implementation:

1. Assess all existing access points into the Domain on the basis of their appropriate location, visibility and signage, ease of use and standard of maintenance and if required provide additional entry points and pathway access into the Domain to facilitate and promote easier pedestrian access.

2. Assess all existing paths and walkways throughout the Domain and progressively extend the network to include a circuit path and bridle track.
3. Improve directional signage to the entry points, exit points and within the reserve to facilitate easier pedestrian movement.
4. Provide unimpeded (including disabled) pedestrian access separated from vehicular access within the Domain where practicable.
5. Realign and enhance the main entrance driveway.
6. Minimise pedestrian/vehicular traffic conflict by providing additional footpaths where conflict occurs, and/or vehicle restrictions in specified locations.
7. Notify by signage the presence of vehicular traffic.
8. Undertake 'traffic calming' measures to reduce the speed of vehicles travelling through the Domain.

9.12 CAR PARKING

Explanation:

Parking controls are considered necessary in order to maintain the open rural character of the Domain and to prevent damage to grass. Parking facilities should be provided at strategic locations to serve the needs of the Domain users without being detrimental to the visual or physical amenity of the reserve. In determining the location and design of any additional parking areas, consideration will be given to minimising visual impact, protecting significant landscape features and avoiding the need for any further internal roading.

Policy 9.12.1

To assess the requirements for car parking in light of the existing facilities and likely future demands.

Policy 9.12.2

To provide safe, convenient parking spaces at a level compatible with the capacity of the reserve.

Implementation:

1. Assess the car parking requirements within the Domain in light of the existing facilities and likely future demands and determine how best to absorb additional parking without adversely affecting the character of the reserve.
2. Investigate the feasibility of constructing an extended car park area inside the Domain boundary adjacent to the sportsfields.
3. Provide for dedicated bus parking areas.

4. Investigate the requirement for a secure vehicle barrier to prevent vehicular access into the Domain at night.

9.13 INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION

Explanation:

The Ashhurst Domain is a unique and valuable education resource offering a wide range of ecological, geological and botanical aspects providing good opportunities for interpretation and education at all levels.

Policy 9.13.1

To promote the Domain as a valuable cultural and natural resource.

Policy 9.13.2

To promote the Domain in educational programmes in order to gain a better understanding and awareness of its values.

Policy 9.13.3

To interpret parts of the Domain.

Implementation:

1. Implement relevant on-site interpretation material and signage supplemented with widely available off-site material.
2. Place small identification plaques on significant trees and groups of trees.
3. Promote the use of the Domain for educational purposes by providing information and assistance to school groups and individuals.
4. Instigate the formation of a 'Friends of the Domain' organisation.

9.14 BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES

Explanation:

A number of buildings and facilities serve the needs of the users and parks staff. Well designed, sited and integrated buildings and facilities can enhance the Domain and the public use and enjoyment of it and complement the parks character and aesthetic values. Others can detract from and have severe detrimental effects on it. Further buildings will generally not be permitted unless they are in the public interest and will improve the functioning of the Domain.

Policy 9.14.1

To ensure that only those buildings and facilities essential for the convenience, comfort and safety of the users are sited within the Domain.

Implementation:

1. Examine the existing buildings and facilities present and critically assess their requirement to be located there.
2. Remove or progressively phase out those buildings and facilities that are no longer essential to the efficient functioning of the reserve.
3. Ensure that all existing buildings and facilities within the reserve are maintained and upgraded to a high standard, and are complementary to their natural setting.

4. Assess all future proposals for additional structures and/or buildings against the following criteria:
 - the need for the structure to be within the Domain;
 - the need for the structure to be sited in the location identified;
 - the maintenance of the park's character;
 - the contribution of the structure to the quality and experience of the park;
 - the particular design and its relationship to the park character;
 - the public benefit to be obtained from the structure;
 - the impact on the immediate locality;
 - the ability to meet the objectives and policies of this Management Plan.
5. Ensure that the following is achieved in relation to all future buildings and/or structures:
 - a design which is appropriate to the site and consistent with both the character of the Domain and all other existing structures and buildings;
 - locations appropriate to the function of the structure.

9.15 LEASES - GENERAL

Explanation:

A number of leases are presently operating within the Domain (refer to Section 7.2). It is essential to monitor and regulate these activities to protect and preserve the natural qualities of the reserve, whilst providing a minimum of compatible facilities for the enjoyment of the users.

Policy 9.15.1

To ensure that all present and future leases and commercial activities are managed in terms of the provisions of the Reserves Act 1977, and current Council leasing and licensing regulations, and in conjunction with other policies contained in this Management Plan.

Policy 9.15.2

To ensure that all existing leases are fulfilled properly by the lessee.

Policy 9.15.3

To ensure that no additional leases for new uses not currently in existence will be considered by the Council if they involve the permanent alienation of land from use by the general public, and that any future leases entered into are directly related to the use of the reserve.

Policy 9.15.4

To ensure that any leases to provide for the continuation of existing uses will be in accordance with the Reserves Act 1977.

Implementation:

1. Ensure that it shall be a condition of any lease granted by the Council that the lessee shall not grant any sub-lease or license to any other person, and the premises shall at all times be used only for the purposes related to the principal recreational activity of the lessee.
2. Ensure that no leases granted are transferred without the prior consent of Council.
3. Ensure that all buildings and facilities occupied by the lessee within the reserve are maintained and upgraded to a high standard, and are complementary to their natural setting.
4. Ensure that all fencing and grounds occupied by the lessee within the reserve are maintained and upgraded to a high standard.
5. Grazing leases are to be of short term duration to enable public use of land when required.

9.16 SITE FURNITURE AND SIGNAGE

Explanation:

A range of styles of site furniture and signs currently exists throughout the Domain. A co-ordinated approach needs to be taken to ensure consistency in styles, aesthetic appeal and suitability of use.

Policy 9.16.1

To adopt a coordinated approach to the design, selection and placement of all site furniture and signs integrated into their natural settings.

Implementation:

1. Assess all existing site furniture and signs, and remove, replace or supplement these as required.
2. Restrict the number of signs to the minimum required.
3. Prohibit all permanent sponsorship signs within the reserve.
4. Develop an integrated signs policy and technical manual covering the complete range of sign design, style, colour, use, placement and maintenance for all signage under the following categories, and in accordance with Council's corporate standards.
 - i). Entrance signs;
 - ii). Directional signs;
 - iii). Walkway/trail markers;
 - iv). Informative signs;
 - v). Interpretive signs and displays.

9.17 EROSION

Explanation:

The cliffs separating the river terrace from the floodplain are prone to erosion both summer and winter and this process is being expedited particularly from the seedling wattles (*Acacia spp.*) growing in the bank. Material from the cliffs has been collapsing into the wetland resulting in silting and accelerating its state of degradation.

Policy 9.17.1

To effectively control and reduce all erosion within the Domain and in particular the cliffs.

Implementation:

1. Assess all existing areas of erosion and undertake measures to prevent any further damage occurring.
2. Eradicate all self sown *Acacia* seedlings from the cliff area and actively remove further seedlings as they occur.

9.18 GRAZING

Explanation:

Grazing of some of the grassed areas of the Domain has been undertaken as a cost effective method of pasture maintenance for areas not currently required for recreational uses.

Policy 9.18.1

To utilise grazing as a means of controlling grass growth within those areas of the Domain not currently required for recreational activities.

Policy 9.18.2

To review the areas of grazing on the reserve as demand for additional recreational usage increases.

Implementation:

1. Ensure that the stocking rates are at an appropriate level for the pasture capacity and ensure that stock type are appropriate for the areas grazed.
2. Require the grazier to maintain the soils, pastures and fences to a high standard.
3. Lease reviews shall be linked to the need for sportsfields identified through the recreation needs analysis.

9.19 ANIMAL PESTS

Explanation:

A number of animal pests have created problems in the Ashhurst Domain over the years. Rabbits, possums, ferrets and stoats have had damaging effects on pasture and vegetation.

Policy 9.19.1

To take measures to control animal pests as they become a public nuisance or are adversely affecting the Domain.

Implementation:

1. Carry out the eradication of animal pests using safe, proven methods and investigate methods to prevent further infestations.

9.20 DOGS

Explanation:

Ashhurst Domain is an ideal place for exercising dogs with its wide open spaces. The majority of dogs (and owners) cause few problems.

Policy 9.20.1

To allow dogs within specified areas of the reserve in cognisance of the Palmerston North City Council's Dog and Cat Bylaw 1997.

Implementation:

1. Enforce the Dog and Cat Bylaw (1997).

10. CONCEPT PLAN

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept plan has been prepared to set guidelines for the development of the Ashhurst Domain over the next five to ten years. Development proposals are based on resolving the identified issues arising within the Domain, on changing recreational demands and on the natural and physical attributes of the site.

10.2 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The landscape development proposals are illustrated on *Figure 5 : Concept Plan*. The aim has been to match recreational activity and associated landscape management with the opportunities and constraints offered by the site.

The concept plan has also assessed earlier proposals suggested by the *1980 Sport and Recreation Consultants Development Plan* and the *Ashhurst Domain Development Plan 1988* in light of changing trends and recreational demands.

10.2.1 Upper River Terrace

This area should continue to be the focus for organised sporting activities with its wide open spaces, existing fields and room for further expansion it is ideally situated. Shelter belt plantings are now becoming an effective buffer to the prevailing wind and effectively breaks the space into more defined units.

Sportsfields

The dominant use of this area is for organised active sport - rugby and soccer in winter, cricket in summer. Potential exists for additional fields to be developed on the area north of the existing fields, as demand requires.

Cricket Wicket

The artificial cricket wicket should be relocated to the main oval with its 'amphitheatre' providing ideal viewing while allowing soccer to continue using the oval during the winter season.

Toilets and Changing Rooms

The lack of facilities for players and Domain users has been an issue for many years. \$70,000 has been allocated in the 1997/1998 financial year for the building of a toilet block. This sum includes \$30,000 for services which would be sufficient for future changing rooms. A sum of \$280,000 has been placed on the 1998/1999 Capital Works Programme for changing rooms and will be subject to approval. These facilities are proposed adjacent to the car park area.

Vegetation

The extensive tree and shrub planting along the road boundaries has achieved significant growth rates and provides shelter, enclosure and amenity values to the area. Earlier close spacing of plants has provided quick effect and now some judicious thinning is required to achieve a structural framework of mature trees and shrubs, and to prevent malformation of the specimens. Mulching with shredded leaf/small branch litter or bark mulch would be of great benefit to the plants.

Car Parking

Car parking for the sportsfields continues to be problematic in that there is insufficient to cater for the demands of the players and spectators. The problem is temporarily exacerbated with the overlapping of games resulted in excessive vehicle numbers. Perceived 'distance' is another factor, with many regarding the extended car park too remote from the fields. It is recommended that a new car park be developed extending beneath the ash trees to the north of the existing car park. One way traffic flow would reduce the amount of space required and lessen the impact. Bus parking should also be catered for and could be accommodated outside the line of trees in the area adjacent to Cambridge Avenue.

Manawatu Canine Centre

The Canine Centre's activities are a compatible use in the Domain and should continue as such.

Former Archery Club Land

Land to the south of the Canine Centre, presently grazed (original archery club), could be utilised for other club activities as demand dictates.

10.2.2 Amenity Area

This area is to remain as the focal area of the Domain with its concentration to facilities and informal activities.

Main Entrance

Entry into the Domain is convoluted at present due to the alignment of the drive. This should be realigned and enhanced to avoid the impression that it is a private driveway leading to the caretaker's house. Signage would improve the street presence of the Domain.

Children's Playground

The playground has been extensively upgraded in the past and requires no further additional development other than the provision of integrated site furniture - seats and litter bins. The large ageing pine trees should be removed for safety reasons and to allow additional light penetration into this area.

Picnic Area

The picnic area is well utilised and as such increasing demand is being placed on the limited toilet facilities. At times, in excess of 500

people can be using the area and therefore additional toilet facilities are required. It is recommended that a dual purpose toilet/kitchen facility be developed that could be used by picnickers and campers. In ground barbecue units would enhance the area and could be run on a coin operated system. Additional seats, litter bins and picnic benches are required to cater for increased needs.

Camping Ground

The camping ground should remain fairly 'basic' as that is where its appeal lies (and its subsequent low charges). The need for simple kitchen/toilet/shower facilities could be combined with the picnic area through the development of a single facility.

Cemetery

No further extensions are proposed for the cemetery at this stage. The Ward Committee will review this in three years.

Drummond Cottage

The original Sexton's Cottage is in a sound condition and would be ideally suited for conversion. However the logistics and economics of conversion as opposed to a purpose built building for basic camping amenities needs to be assessed further.

10.2.3 Native Forest

The native forest is an important ecological and botanical resource which must be conserved and enhanced. It provides a valuable educational facility and amenity.

Bush Walks

Existing walking tracks should be upgraded and signposted to enhance their use. Interpretation markers for significant trees / tree groups would increase the educational value of the forest. Walkway markers are required indicating the route down to the river and river flood plain.

Regeneration

Isolated pine trees are to be removed from the native forest and replaced with indigenous species. (Refer to Section 9.3: Vegetation for additional recommendations).

10.2.4 River Flood Plain

This lower area is valuable as an informal 'natural' area away from the more intense activities of the upper terrace. Its close proximity to the river and strong sense of enclosure created by the cliffs add to its attractiveness. It would be inappropriate to 'develop' the area for intense activities and it should remain in passive use.

Flood Plain

Longer term proposals for this area include informal grassed open space areas with framework tree plantings to define areas. Walkways would link with the native forest and upper terrace areas. The wetland would form the focal point and the native bush area would extend down to it. Grazing on the flood plain should continue as a cost effective maintenance regime until the area is developed sufficiently.

Wetland

The wetland area is an environmentally significant resource and must be protected, preserved and enhanced. It has degenerated rapidly through silting up. Recommended actions are covered under Section 9.5: Wetland. Fencing of the wetland from stock is critical until planting has established. Viewing of the wetland area should be encouraged from the cliffs above it.

Cliffs

The cliffs form a significant backdrop to the wetland but are rapidly eroding due to the self sown wattle seedlings. These must be eradicated to prevent further erosion. (Refer to Section 9.17: Erosion)

Appendix 1 : List of Fauna of the Ashhurst Domain

Source: Kirsty Andrews, NZ's Natural Heritage Case Study - The Ashhurst Domain (undated).

Appendix 2 : List of Flora of the Ashhurst Domain

Source: Kirsty Andrews, NZ's Natural Heritage Case Study - The Ashhurst Domain (undated).

Appendix 3 : Public User Survey

Submissions Received in Response to Notice of Intention to Prepare the Management Plan for the Ashhurst Domain.

1. Royal Forest and Bird Society

PO Box 961
Palmerston North
(Jackie Carr / Peter van Essen)

- Reserve is an important lowland native bush remnant which should be conserved
- Important wetland area, river and wildlife
- Survey required of the area to identify features eg. rare maiden hair fern
- Noxious weed and pest control required to encourage regeneration and conservation
- Wetland area relatively scarce - restoration of wetland should be investigated
- Wetland offers diversity of habitats, could be used more extensively as an environmental educational resource
- Existing tracks should be maintained, development limited by carrying capacity
- Site requires sensitive maintenance, development should not compromise natural values
- New plantings with locally sourced propagation material
- Consult with local Forest and Bird Society

2. D A Walker

44 Bamfield Street
Ashhurst

- Toilets for sports area
- Changing rooms and showers for sports area
- Toilets, showers and kitchen for campers
- Toilets for picnic area

3. Manawatu Football Association

PO Box 4184
Palmerston North

- Additional playing fields
- Soccer would use the Domain as an alternative to Palmerston North grounds
- Code has potential to expand in some age groups
- Viable alternative to PN grounds

4. Clem King

58 Cambridge Avenue
Ashhurst

- Past development must be recognised
- Maintenance should be top priority
- Urgent need for additional toilets off Cambridge Avenue - at least one toilet should be open 24 hours
- Showers for sportsfields should be subsidised by sporting organisations
- Native bush and wetlands are valuable assets to be maintained and protected for future generations - fencing and tracks essential. Protect wetland from crumbling cliffs
- Camping ground - small basic kitchen with bench, sink and power points required
- Keep camping low cost
- Drummond Cottage could be utilised for toilet and shower facilities, rooms for indoor activities

- Maximum benefits for minimal costs
- Cemetery of historical importance for Ashhurst
- Cemetery could expand to north-west
- Model aeroplanes could be operated from river flats
- Leave sports grounds open and uncluttered - no secure fencing
- Signage required - entrances, cemetery, motor camp and sports grounds
- Entrances should be improved and sealed, judder bars essential

5. N H Blair

85 Wyndham Street

Ashhurst

(Annual Plan submission)

- Toilet block essential adjacent to playing fields
- Changing rooms required
- New car park area should be developed beneath trees adjacent to playing fields (suggested layout provided)
- Bus parking could be in existing gravel car park

Appendix 5 : Bibliography

Andrews, Kirsty (undated). New Zealand's Natural Heritage Case Study - The Ashhurst Domain, (Unpublished).

Palmerston North City Council, 1996. Proposed District Plan.

Palmerston North City Council, 1996. Strategic Plan.

Palmerston North City Council, 1995. City Vision - Palmerston North 1995-2015.

Palmerston North City Council, 1992. Recreation Strategy.

Appendix 7 : Proposed District Plan Excerpts

Policies:

- 1.1 *To recognise and provide for a wide range of recreational and associated ancillary activities.*
- 1.2 *To provide for the flood control and maintenance works, of the Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council or the Palmerston North City Council.*
- 1.4 *To ensure that areas within the Zone are developed to cater for local and city wide recreation and leisure needs.*
- 2.1 *To manage the impact of building development and/or redevelopment, structures and signs which either front onto, or are adjacent to a Residential Zone.*
- 2.2 *To avoid, remedy or mitigate the adverse effects of recreational activities and ancillary activities on neighbouring residential areas.*

Cultural Heritage Zone

The objective and policies for this zone are:

Objectives:

To facilitate and enable the Tangata Whenua to exercise tino Rangatiratanga and Kaitiakitanga.

Policies:

- 1.1 *To identify sites and objects of significant cultural heritage value to Tangata Whenua.*
- 1.2 *To protect identified sites and objects of significant cultural heritage value to Tangata Whenua.*
- 1.3 *To mitigate the effects of activities or development which could disturb or destroy the intrinsic cultural heritage values associated with an identified site or object.*
- 1.4 *To consult with Tangata Whenua regarding the identification, protection and management of sites and objects considered to be of cultural heritage value.*