

# Waitematā Local Board update

To: Waitematā Local Board

From: Lynda Lucas

Date: 6 December 2016

Subject: Symonds Street Cemetery West new path connection options

---

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this workshop is to:

1. provide a short presentation on the progress to date on the Symonds Street Cemetery 10 year development plan (2012-2022);
2. present options for the proposed path connection through the west cemetery and make a recommendation.

## 2. Details

### Plan for path connection

In 2012 when the Grafton Gully Cycleway (GGC) was being planned two links were proposed by AT/NZTA through the cemetery. At that time the Symonds Street Cemetery (SSC) development plan was being written and the links were considered as a potential option to reduce some of the CPTED issues. It was proposed that by linking the eastern and western sides of the cemetery via the GGC, activity in the park would be increased by creating an accessible loop and encouraging users of the cycleway to cut through the cemetery to K Rd. At that early stage of planning a basic concept was requested from the Parks design team; 'Grafton Cemetery West - Potential improvements as part of integration with CMJ project' (Attachment 1).

AT decided against putting in the access points from the GGC because of a change in levels on the cycleway making it too steep to connect with the cemetery so this took away some of the urgency and also meant that council would be responsible for their own connections.

In 2014 the Waitematā local board approved the development plan and allocated the budget for improvements in the cemetery outlined in the SSC development plan. Installation of a path in the western cemetery was identified as part of the plan; \$180,000 was allocated for the Grafton Gully Cycleway connections. The design team prepared a Version 2 "Symonds Street Cemetery – Pathways implementation plan' (Attachment 2) which was adopted by the local board in 2014 and based on original paths, but included some new paths in the western and eastern cemeteries. The paths identified in the implementation plan for the eastern cemetery were completed in 2016 using renewals budgets.

In FY16 the \$180,000 budget for the new western path was lost in budget cuts so the project was put on hold. In FY17 the Local Board allocated LDI CAPEX to install the new path connection. Following a site visit with Vernon, Shale and AT representatives, it was agreed the preferred route was following the alignment of the overland flow path, with an option of a link to Symonds Street (Attachment 3).

### **Changes since the path connection was proposed**

The link to the GGC from the eastern (Anglican) side of the cemetery was also considered during this meeting. Due to the difference in height of the GGC there is difficulties in making this connection, which could prove costly and is not favoured by AT. One of the advantages with links in the east and west sides of the cemetery are to provide a pedestrian loop between the sections. If only the western side can be linked to GGC then this would only be of less benefit to activating the cemetery.

Initially advice to the local board was that the path would be of benefit in improving the cemetery. The western cemetery is beautiful in the summer but in 2012 was quite muddy in the winter because of the terrain and very few made paths. In 2012 the drain was blocked and this made flooding worse, but an increased maintenance service now ensures that the drain is cleared regularly to keep it flowing.

Improvements have been made to the cemetery and a significant amount of the development plan has been implemented including: signage; paths; trails; story telling; multi-media exposure; increased maintenance; and volunteer activity. The park looks more loved and cared for. There is less vandalism and damage and there are more events and an increase in visitors to the park. There is also an improved link to Upper Queen Street which is being used by pedestrians through the cemetery from Symonds Street.

The recent development of a Rose Trail has created a new walking route around the western cemetery. Despite prolonged periods of heavy rain this winter, the Rose Trail remained walkable without getting muddy. Media has been developed (Interp signage, Mobile App and Trail guides) to promote the use of the Rose Trail and encourage visitors to take an alternative to natural drains areas which can become boggy in the middle of the cemetery.



*Photos to show where the Rose Trail that crosses the overland flow path remained quite dry during the winter, helped by the amount of leaf fall there in the winter.*

### 3. Discussion and Officers Comments

Initially the benefits of two connections to the GGC were attractive to increase desirable activity in both sides of the cemetery. As the option for a connection in the eastern (Anglican) side is no longer favoured by AT due to the height difference and the speed that cyclists are travelling along the GGC, there is only the option for the western link. This will not create the desired link between each side without crossing Symonds Street.

The GGC is mainly used by commuting cyclists, sometimes reaching high speeds on this route and AT suggested that additional connections may not be safe for pedestrians. AT were doubtful that many people would use the cemetery to access the GGC as the entry point on Upper Queen St is nearby and probably more accessible.

The back of the cemetery is fenced and there is a concern that if this is opened up it may add to the CPTED issues rather than resolve them. As it would provide a through access at night and for undesirable activity at any time of the day.

Despite the development surrounding the cemetery, the current view across the western cemetery from the K Rd entrance west is relatively unchanged from how it would have appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. As you walk through the cemetery from the Jewish, through the Presbyterian to the Catholic Section, many of the headstones are still in good condition and you get a sense of the Picturesque landscape that the 19<sup>th</sup> Century cemeteries were renowned for. A new path connection to the GGC would considerably change this undeveloped area of the cemetery.



*Photo of the Western cemetery showing proposed route of the path connection to GGC*

#### **Consultation**

Initial consultation was undertaken with the Friends of Symonds Street Cemetery, at their meeting on 31 March 2016. Options were provided for discussion and an order of preference was given.

Table to show options for a new pathway connection from K Rd to Cycleway

Options for a new pathway connection from KRd to Grafton Gully Cycleway	Benefits	Dis-benefits	FSSC Feedback/ Preference
Do nothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beautiful large grassed area remains undisturbed and park like.</li> <li>• No change</li> <li>• Could wait and see if the New Rose Trail resolves some of the issues with activation in the west cemetery.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties in getting to the Catholic section in winter. Grassy slopes can be slippery in wet weather.</li> <li>• Not accessible in wet weather</li> </ul>	OK
Mulch cemetery path and open access to cycleway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activation of the Catholic section.</li> <li>• Improved access through the Catholic and Presbyterian sections.</li> <li>• Slight improvement to access across boggy areas in winter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening up the fence may encourage undesirable behaviour.</li> <li>• Needs regular topping up.</li> <li>• Mulch spreads easily and can look untidy.</li> <li>• Not an accessible option.</li> </ul>	Best option (but some concern about the opening up the access as currently this end of the cemetery is fenced).
Scoria (boxed or unboxed) path	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activation of the Catholic section.</li> <li>• Improved access through the Catholic and Presbyterian sections.</li> <li>• Improved access across boggy areas in winter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening up the fence may encourage undesirable behaviour.</li> <li>• Path would cut through the large grassed area.</li> <li>• Modern treatment in a undisturbed area of the cemetery.</li> <li>• Scoria may wash out on slopes.</li> <li>• Not so good for mowers.</li> </ul>	OK
Boardwalk / boxed path mix as shown in original designs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activation of the Catholic section.</li> <li>• Very good accessibility through the Catholic and Presbyterian sections including slopes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening up the fence may encourage undesirable behaviour.</li> <li>• Path would cut through the large grassed area.</li> <li>• Modern treatment in a undisturbed area of the cemetery.</li> <li>• May have issues where the gap between graves limits the size of the path.</li> </ul>	OK but could be expensive
Asphalt path	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible</li> <li>• Connection to cycleway</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As above</li> </ul>	Least popular

Initial consultation with iwi, Auckland Council Heritage Department and Heritage New Zealand, have all indicated their preference is to apply 'the minimum degree of physical intervention consistent with long term care' and that their preference is that no new path connections are added in the cemetery if they affect or go over burial sites.

If the path connection is developed further there would be some consent issues to overcome and associated costs. Although the proposed route would not run over the top of known burial sites, ground penetrating radar would be required to confirm this. The proposed path has two pinch points where it would have to go between existing memorials which would mean that it may be less than one meter in width, which may not provide the accessible outcome that was sought. This would require further investigation.

The implementation of the Rose Trail provides an alternative route around the cemetery which is dry for most of the year and has had a positive impact with appropriate and desirable use of the cemetery. Adding a connecting path through the middle of the cemetery will add more of the hard landscaping elements into this heritage park, which is currently relatively untouched.

#### **4. Recommendation/Action**

The local board reviews the feedback from the Friends of Symonds Street Cemetery and other stakeholders with respect to diminishing the cultural and heritage values of the place and does not proceed with the implementation of path connections from Symonds Street and K Rd to the Grafton Gully Cycleway through Symonds Street Cemetery.

#### **5. Next Steps**

The next steps would be to consider whether to reassign the \$180,000 LDI CAPEX budget to another project within the cemetery or to another project elsewhere in the local board area.

The projects that are planned for the cemetery for the next three years are currently funded from CAPEX and OPEX. Following the condition assessment of existing memorials a programme has been identified for the memorials that are of high risk. Additional budget is required for the conservation of monuments where there are no descendant families or cannot be contacted, but this is considered to be an operational expense.

#### **Attachments:**

1. Grafton Cemetery West - Potential improvements as part of integration with CMJ project (Version 1).
2. Symonds Street Cemetery – Pathways implementation plan (Version 2).
3. Map of Grafton West Cemetery 2016 proposed path alignment showing Rose Trail.
4. Map of Grafton West Cemetery (circa 1940s) to show the layout of cemetery paths and memorials.
5. Symonds Street Cemetery Project progress update to Waitemata Local Board November 2016.