



Lichfield Reserve

Reserve Management Plan



Photograph One: Wide view of the Reserve.

June 2010

Adopted by the South Waikato District Council

(date)

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INTRODUCTION

Lichfield Reserve is the community's premier recreational reserve and is located adjacent to Lichfield Primary School with which it has a strong association. It is a prominent community asset and because of this has a strong community feel. Lichfield Reserve provides an authentic English character feeling with its surrounding scenery and strong community sentiment. It was established over 100 years ago.

The Management Plan for Lichfield Reserve has been prepared to enable clarification of the overriding management objectives and policies for the protection, development and ongoing maintenance of the Reserve. The Plan is a tool by which information on the current development of the Reserve can be summarised, and future development proposals and maintenance requirements set out clearly.

General policies of relevance to all reserves, including Lichfield Reserve are detailed in the document "South Waikato District Reserves Policy 2010" which needs to be read in conjunction with this Management Plan.

LOCATION

Lichfield Reserve is located on Kells Lane in Lichfield, next to the Lichfield Primary School. Public pedestrian access is from the Lane, through the carpark provided on the Reserve. Vehicular access is available in two places along Kells Lane. School access to the Reserve is from the rear of the school property, through the hall site.

The Reserve falls under the Waikato Conservancy of the Department of Conservation.

RESERVE DESCRIPTION

The Lichfield Reserve has an 'English Pastoral Landscape Character' derived from the significant plantings of large deciduous trees from the northern hemisphere such as the oaks and the grassed open space and adjacent pasture.

There is an historic cultural overlay as some of the trees planted in memory of the soldiers who died in World War One and remnants of the early settlement in the form of light standards remain on site but are not used. These elements reinforce the English pastoral landscape character of the Domain. Adding to the pastoral character of the site is the view obtained from the road which is framed and filtered by the canopy of the oak trees to the open space and adjacent farmland.

Of moderate visual appeal the land is flat and gentle rolling pasture. On the Reserve's north-west corner is the Lichfield Pony Club building and storage shed. A car parking area is situated on the south-west side of the Reserve and is also used as parking for the school and associated hall use. The South Waikato District Council retains responsibility for maintenance of the carpark.

HISTORY OF THE RESERVE

The earliest mention of Lichfield and surrounding District is found in the records of the Piako County Council which details how the Patetere Block had been to the

Native Land Court numerous times. The land Lichfield was developed on was originally owned by local Maori and bought by the Matarawa Land Company who owned all the land between Cambridge and Taupo. Nancy Sneddon, a prominent Lichfield local, states that an old Maori of the District told her that the Matarawa Land Co. bought the land from the Maoris for blankets, and poor ones at that. At this time, Lichfield was then a wilderness of Manuka, Tawheri and Tussock and used as a staging post. The water tower was used to fill the trains which travelled to Mokai.

In 1879 the Thames Valley Land Company (TVLC) negotiated for the purchase of the land and in 1883 it was transferred to them for £230,000. Land transfer plans of the town of Lichfield were set down in 1884 and included a large township and cathedral square. The land was purchased by the Crown in 1905 from the TVLC under the Lands for Consolidation Act 1900 due to the company going into liquidation. This land became known as the Selwyn Settlement and was cut into smaller holdings which included the Lichfield Domain. One quarter of the area was set aside as a forest reserve.

The Reserve used to be one of the biggest cycling grass velodromes in New Zealand, second to Cooks Gardens in terms of quality; in fact the remains of the old light posts are still there but are not in use. The original Post Office which used to be part of Miss Kell's Cottage was situated across from the school.

The Reserve was originally used for community activities such as calf days, church services and jubilee celebrations. Picnics were also a common occurrence with shade provided by the numerous oak trees. Nowadays, any special event in Lichfield incorporates the use of the Reserve in conjunction with the Community Hall which is situated along side it. A native bush area within the Lichfield Reserve has been developed with the financial assistance of the Lichfield School.

The Reserve is used these days as a social gathering place, once for large sporting events such as cycling, athletics, soccer and rugby and now includes all things involving the community. An example of community use is the Lap-a-thon Telethon held in 1977 by Lichfield School whereby all pupils took part in a sponsored run around the Lichfield Reserve. Combined with the profits of a stall, the 60 pupils ran enough laps to raise more than \$200. Situations and events like these portray the strong community spirit within Lichfield and incorporate the Reserve as a prominent meeting place for such events.

PURPOSE

The Reserve is the centre for recreation, community functions and sport in Lichfield and was once used as a social gathering place, cycling, athletics, soccer, rugby and all things involved with the community. The Reserve can also be used as a walking area for dogs. Under local dog control bylaws, the Reserve is classified as a 'Restrained Dog Area' which allows dogs on the Reserve with the constraint that they must be on leads at all times.

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

The memorial oak trees along the west boundary of the Reserve are the most distinctive feature of the site together with the area of grassed open space. They were planted for each soldier from the area who had died in the World Wars and provided for a village green effect. The height and bulk of these trees provide a significant scale to the site and together with the maturity and predominantly

European species, are indicative of an older style public open space established in the late eighteen hundreds in New Zealand.

Boundary planting is a special feature with its mix of exotic and indigenous tree species. The row of trees starting at the northern end of the school consists of a large oak (*Quercus robur*) in the car park and from here northwards are maple species, London Plane, large poplar species, Chestnut, Totara and a Walnut tree. Along the eastern boundary of the Reserve starting at the northern end the trees run as follows; Willow Tortuosa, Maple species, Cedrus Deodara, Willow Turtuosa, unidentified species, Prunus species, Chinese Fir (*Cunninghamia Lanceolata*), Silverbirch, Thuja, Ginko, *Cryptomeria Elegans*, Silverbirch, *Cryptomeria*.

Planting around the perimeter of a site with a clear open space for community events is a traditional approach for the establishment of public open space especially in rural or small communities throughout New Zealand. It was intended that the Reserve be used for a diverse range of events and uses from agriculture shows to local informal sports and celebrations as testified by the many historic photographs of community events over time.

HERITAGE SITES

There are no heritage sites within the Reserve.

USE

The area is available for a range of active and passive activities. Its use is moderate. Although not as great as it once was, the Reserve still provides an exceptional community facility.

The fenced off area of the Reserve is mainly used as Lichfield Primary School's playfield and sports field as it does not have its own. During the school term weekly sports afternoons are held there by the School, weather permitting. The School also run a wide range of sporting and recreational activities there including athletics, soccer, touch, cricket, kite flying, gala days, pupil-parent community social evenings, and their annual Agricultural Club Day. The School also hosts the local Inter-School Soccer Day on the Reserve.

The School curriculum uses the Reserve area to extend learning in the classroom by using the open space provided, as well as making use of the trees for natural science. The open area is used most lunch times for after-lunch recreation by pupils.

The Ministry of Education has shown a long term commitment to Lichfield Primary School by investing a large amount to upgrade the site in recent years, and the School is keen to ensure their use of the Reserve continues in its current form.

The Putaruru Pony Club is a prominent user of the Reserve which was first established on the Reserve in the 1950's. The Club is restricted to the fenced off area so as not to enter the land used for the school's playground.

The Reserve also is strongly connected with and to, the Lichfield Hall. The Hall was opened in 2005 in a partnership between the South Waikato District Council and Lichfield Primary School. It is on school land and was designed for use with the Reserve for events in mind; because of this toilets for Reserve activities are available at the hall.



Photograph Two: The Reserve in use as the school playing field

With the gathering and escalating use of the hall there may be higher use of the Reserve for events such as car rallies and fairs.

ADMINISTRATION

The Reserve is owned by the Department of Conservation but is administered by the South Waikato District Council.

The first Domain Board was appointed to have control of the Lichfield Domain in 1946 (*New Zealand Gazette* page 120). The first meeting of the Board was held on the 4 February 1946 in the Lichfield Public Hall.

Appointed members at that time were as follows:

- Ray Limbrick Baldwin
- Leo Stannard Knight
- Cecil Gill
- David Lawrence Bengé
- John Herbert Burgess

In 1958 the following members were registered as Domain Board members;

- Ray Limbrick Baldwin
- Arthur Grieg Callaghan
- James Richard Gratton
- Robert Gray Lynn
- John Beauchamp Mannix
- Walter Dalziel Sneddon

Subsequent appointment of persons to be members of the Domain Board (1970 onwards) were not published in the *New Zealand Gazette* but in the local newspaper following approval by the Commissioner of Crown Lands (Lands and Survey Department) in terms of Section 6 (1) Reserves and Domains Act 1953. The term of the Board was seven years with the new Board being appointed by

the Commissioner of Crown Lands on 17 April 1973 and again on 30 November 1982.

By *New Zealand Gazette* 1989 (pages 2,484 and 2,485), under Sections 205 and 211 of the Local Government (Waikato Region) Reorganisation Order 1989, the functions, duties and powers of the Lichfield Recreation Reserve Board passed to the South Waikato District Council. As the Reserve Board only held an appointment to control and manage the Reserve this became the function that was passed to Council by that legislation.

Council has appointed a standing committee, namely the Lichfield/Tirau Reserve Committee, to look after the day to day management of this Reserve pursuant to its powers under the then Local Government Act 1974 and its replacement the Local Government Act 2002 (Clause 32, Schedule 7). The objective of this Committee is to ensure the efficient management of the Lichfield Reserve. The Committee advises on the planning and management of the Reserve and recommends fees and charges to the Council for approval. They also act to prepare operating and maintenance programmes for the Reserve's Asset Management Plan.

The Lichfield/Tirau Reserve Committee has an important role in terms of advising, monitoring, making recommendations, policy planning and the oversight of any operations inherent to the Reserve. Although the Committee has many objectives and roles they have no power to initiate actions and act purely in an advisory capacity. Where the District Council has delegation it may choose to act on those recommendations. Some decisions about the Reserve will still need to be referred to the Department of Conservation.

USER GROUPS

- Putaruru Pony Club (PPC) uses the Reserve for meetings, dressage events and practices. The Reserve also houses their clubrooms. Their season begins mid-September and ends in April. During this the Reserve is used 3-4 times a month for practicing. Occasionally Timberlands, the PPC parent club, and PPC hold events on the Reserve whereby a ground hire charge is ascertained.
- Lichfield Primary School use the Reserve daily during the school term for athletics, sporting and recreational activities and as their playing fields
- The community in general have access to the Reserve for picnics or recreation.



Photograph Three: The old oaks planted in commemoration of the soldiers who went to war from Lichfield; in the background the Lichfield Pony Club House.

LESSEES

Any lease over the Reserve must be by way of concession in terms of Section 59A of the Reserves Act 1977 and in accordance with Part 3B of the Conservation Act 1987. The Reserve is leased informally and used for grazing livestock which helps with maintenance; the lessee also mows the part of the Reserve that is in use by the School.

Lessee	Term	Expiry	For
A. van der Heyden	*	*	Grazing

*\$200 with no date specified, this is a special relationship with Council that was first set up by Mr Cantwell, former Parks and Reserves Manager. This is an informal partnership where Mr van der Heyden is allowed to graze his sheep/cattle or make hay using the fenced off section of the Reserve thus keeping maintenance costs down for Council in return for mowing services.

The Putaruru Pony Club lease an area on which they have erected their own storage shed. The grounds are also subject to ground hire charges for occasions such as Pony Club events whereby they pay on a fee per horse basis. These charges are set by the South Waikato District Council.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION

Section 26 Selwyn Block XV Patetere North Survey District -Lichfield

Area: 4.3706 Hectares



Figure One: Map of the Lichfield Reserve pictured in green and Lichfield Primary School in pink

CLASSIFICATION

In 1907 (pg 3,325), the Lichfield Reserve was bought under the Public Domains' Act 1881 and was known thereafter as the Lichfield Domain. Note that the gazette notice and the Survey Office plan do not indicate how the land became a recreation Reserve in the first place.

The Reserves Act 1977 came into force 1 January 1977 with the Reserves and Domains Act 1953 being repealed. The Reserves Act 1977 also provided in Section 2 that the definition of "Reserve or Public Reserve" includes "any land that was immediately before the commencement of this Act was a domain or public domain within the meaning of the Reserves and Domains Act 1953".

By *New Zealand Gazette* 1980 (page 3,005), pursuant to the Reserves Act 1977, Section 26 classified the Lichfield Domain as a Reserve for recreation purposes.

Under the District Plan the land is zoned as a Recreation Reserve.

THE FUTURE OF THE RESERVE

Any future development must retain/enhance the existing English pastoral character and facilitate and encourage the continued use of the open space by the Lichfield Primary School and other community groups such as the Putaruru Pony Club.

The link with the Lichfield Hall is essential in terms of shared facilities (toilets) and the potential to promote the Reserve as a venue for local gala, market, agriculture days, informal community sports and picnics.

A carpark has recently been developed to service the School, Hall and Reserve. There is a large mature oak tree in the immediate vicinity of the carpark and at present vehicles can park under the canopy of the tree. There is significant potential to impact on the health and longevity of this historic tree and it is recommended that the carpark is reconfigured and that an area under the tree is fenced off to protect the tree.

To compensate for the potential loss of parking, the existing carpark could be reconfigured with clearly marked spaces to ensure a more economic parking of vehicles rather than the casual parking pattern at present. The installation of wheel stops would encourage motorists to use of the full depth of the carpark to allow for two rows of right angle parking spaces.

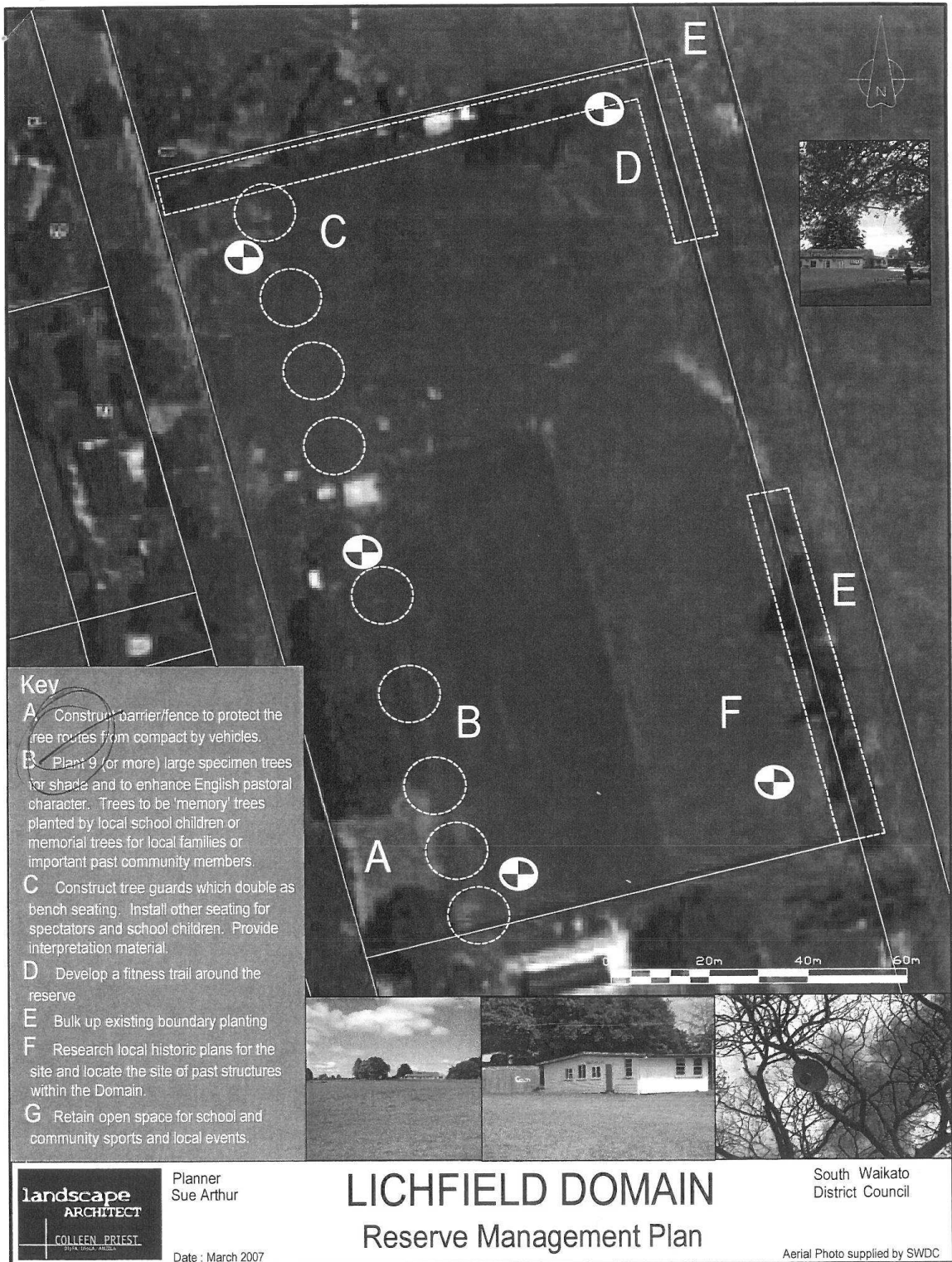
Development Options

1. To ensure the retention of the landscape character of the site, additional deciduous trees (oak species) should be planted along the western boundary of the site. These trees should be planted as a row of trees on the inside of the existing trees at equal distance apart. The location of each tree should be carefully considered to avoid impact on the view of the Reserve from the adjacent residential properties. (Refer to plan)

2. It is intended that the additional oaks be planted as mature trees (up to 4m high) with the opportunity for members of the local community or families of school children to donate the trees as 'memory trees' with appropriate signage to acknowledge the gifting. Special trees could also commemorate past valued members of the community and also the ending of the Lichfield Domain Board in 2005. Seating could also be donated/commemorated in this manner.
3. Planting of indigenous species should continue around the remaining boundary fences.
4. Site furniture could be introduced as part of the new tree planting including tree guards around all the trees doubling as seating. With additional seating in the shade of the proposed trees closest to the school, hall and carpark for school children and spectators.
5. One community project could involve the construction of a fitness trail around the perimeter of the Reserve. The intention would be to encourage the local community and school pupils to 'test/challenge' themselves through the use of the simple but purpose built timber steps/benches etc. designed to give a well rounded fitness workout in a relatively short time. These simple structures could also double as outdoor teaching spaces and during school and school holidays as adventure/play equipment for school pupils and local and visiting children.
6. To take a hands-on approach to the history of the District the pupils at Lichfield Primary School could research the history of the Lichfield Settlement and reproduce the city map with an outline of the proposed township and cathedral square.
7. It has been suggested to plant some Totara to commemorate the passing of Ray Baldwin, a valued member of the community, and the ending of Lichfield Domain Board in 2005.
8. The inclusion of signage portraying historic information about the Reserve itself is suggested to add to visitor's experience at the Reserve

Maintenance

Council plans to maintain this Reserve at its current level as a community asset separate from the school and hall. There will be some minor aesthetic improvements such as crown lifting of the trees which would allow better mowing and also better access for the community along this section of the Reserve. Also the eastern row of trees is in need of some pruning, drum removals and culling of barberry and hawthorn.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Information for the classification, legal description and management of the Domain/Reserve was found in the *New Zealand Gazette's*, Council Records and the Department of Conservation.

The history of the Domain/Reserve was established from members of the Lichfield community through discussions and workshops, the Lichfield

School archives and the following books:

- A History of Putaruru and Districts, The Putaruru Press, 1984.
- K. Jensen, *Crucible of Change: Matamata County 1950-1983*, Commissioned by MCC 1984.
- C.W. Vennell, M. Gordon, M.E.W. Fitzgerald, T.E. McMillan and G.G. Griffiths, *Centennial History of Matamata Plains*, Commissioned by MCC 1951.

South Waikato District Council File notes

South Waikato District Council website

New Zealand Gazettes

South Waikato District Council Long Term Council Community Plan, 2006