

6. LINFIELD CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL SPORTS CLUB PROPOSAL AT CUTHBERTS GREEN

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The purpose of this report is to seek a recommendation from the Board on progressing a proposal for a sports development at Cuthberts Green.

CONTEXT

The proposal has arisen as a result of a direct request from the Linfield Cultural and Recreational Sports Club. The Parks and Waterways Unit, Property Unit, Leisure Unit, and City Streets Unit have all had some input into the proposal. The proposal is not specifically included in the annual plan, though some provision is made for sports field developments.

As Cuthberts Green is a district sports park and the proposal may have significant budget implications, it is being referred to both the Hagley Ferrymead Community Board and the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Relevant Current Policy

(a) Recreation and Sport Policy

The Christchurch City Council is committed to making a significant and sustainable contribution to the quality of life of its residents, particularly its children and youth, by supporting a broad range of recreation and sport services, facilities and programmes.

(b) Physical Recreation and Sport Strategy

Moving together to provide a city where people participate and enjoy, and have the opportunity to perform and excel in physical recreation and sport.

2. Description Of The Proposal

The Linfield Cultural and Recreational Sports Club is proposing to develop new soccer and rugby fields on approximately 5.4 hectares of land in Cuthberts Green, Kearneys Rd (see attached plan). The Club, formerly Linwood Rugby Club, is amalgamating with Rangers AFC and caters for rugby, soccer, and touch and is exploring options for netball, softball, and bowls.

The Club currently owns clubrooms and grounds on the western side of Kearneys Road and has an existing lease from the Council of the 1.5 hectare rugby field to the south east of the subject area. This lease runs until 2012 with a right of renewal. The current proposal is a resurrection of a former 1993 proposal by Linwood Rugby Club which went on hold through lack of funding.

The area proposed for development is currently covered in poor quality forestry trees of very little economic and environmental value and is fenced off from the main part of Cuthberts Green. It is a buffer zone for the adjacent oxidation ponds and is zoned Open Space 3 in the proposed City Plan.

3. Issues For Consideration

(a) Demand for sports fields

Currently, the city has excess capacity to cater for the demand for sports fields. However, fields are not always available close to clubrooms. The Bromley Wainoni area is well serviced with sports fields with Bexley Reserve, Wainoni Park, Avondale Park, Porritt Park, Avon Park, Bromley Park, and Linwood Park all located within a 3km radius of the Linfield Club. These parks are almost fully used in winter, Porritt Park has one spare field for junior soccer, Wainoni Park has one spare junior field and Avondale Park has two spare junior fields. The Club has identified a need for additional sports fields close to their current facilities in order to meet their own expanding activities.

As part of this proposal, Rangers AFC is looking to sell its land on McGregors Rd and amalgamate with the Linfield Club. Amalgamation and co-location of sports clubs is being encouraged by Council for more efficient use of resources and to reduce the strain on clubs to manage and maintain facilities.

(b) Demographics
The area is characterised by a mixture of old and young residents but with higher than average numbers of children. There is a high percentage of Maori and Pacific Islanders living in the area. Income levels are low.

(c) Alternative use of the site
Currently the site is not promoted for recreation use but is used occasionally for orienteering events. It is fenced off and is grazed by cattle as part of the Council's farming operations. The area has potential as a small scale forest recreation area, with walking and mountain biking tracks similar to Bottle Lake Forest Park. If sports fields are developed this opportunity would be reduced to a small area of trees between the Kearneys Rd site and existing Cuthberts Green sports fields.

Recreation use of the site is compatible with its role as a buffer zone for the oxidation ponds.

(d) Options
Three options for responding to the proposal have been examined.
(i) Decline the application.
(ii) Lease the site to the Club for them to develop at their own expense.
(iii) Council develop the site in partnership with the Club for annual allocation to the Club.

The economic, environmental and social advantages and disadvantages of the three options are discussed below:

Option (i) Decline the application.

- Economic advantages - Savings can be made by not developing the site and retaining it for grazing.
- Economic disadvantages – None
- Environmental advantages – Existing habitat comprises mainly young *Radiata* pines (>5m) with grassy and scrub-covered clearings. Pines have been planted in plantation rows, except on the eastern side where trees have been placed more haphazardly and other species are present, giving a more natural woodland appearance.

The site offers habitat for mainly insectivorous and seed-eating birds – including several natives, but mainly introduced passerines. Declining the application would retain this habitat and leave underlying soils relatively undisturbed. The trees currently provide shelter from the prevailing easterly wind.

- Environmental disadvantages – Currently the pine trees and their prunings are potentially a fire hazard of concern to some of the neighbouring residents. This risk would remain.

The opportunity to enhance the existing habitat by planting natives around the border of the proposed sports fields would be lost if the proposal does not go ahead.

- Social advantages – Retain the potential recreation and aesthetic value of the existing trees, and current orienteering activities.
- Social disadvantages – The opportunity for club amalgamation may be lost and the Club would not be able to expand their activities on this site.

Option (ii) The Club leases the site and takes responsibility for all capital works.

- Economic advantages – No costs incurred by the Council.
- Economic disadvantages – Huge expense to the Club, which is not incurred by other clubs. If the Club tries to develop the site cheaply, it may need upgrading within a few years as the existing field does now.

- Environmental advantages – When not in use by people, the sports fields are likely to provide feeding and roosting habitat for several common native bird species, including gulls, White-faced Heron, Spur-winged Plover, and Paradise Shelduck. The latter species - the most terrestrial of New Zealand's native waterfowl - has begun colonising parkland in the vicinity. This species visits other parts of Cuthberts Green, as well as nearby Bromley Park, Linwood Park, Kerrs Reach, Avondale Golf course and Bexley Reserve. It is anticipated that Paradise Shelduck will become resident at Cuthberts Green in the near future.
- Environmental disadvantages – The loss of this partly grown pine plantation at Cuthberts Green is unlikely to have a more than localised effect on bird populations. Planting of more diverse vegetation around the edges of the sports fields and through the open woodland area immediately north of the site, would mitigate much of the habitat loss. This is particularly so if a component of native bush revegetation is included as part of the redevelopment project.
- Social advantages – The Club amalgamates with Rangers AFC and expands its activities offering more opportunities for the community. The Club is also considering options for working with the Bowling Association.
- Social disadvantages - The Club would have exclusive rights to the site and no public access would be guaranteed. Recreation potential of the trees would be lost. The site would be more exposed to the prevailing easterly winds.

Option (iii) Council develop the site in partnership with the Club for annual allocation to the Club.

- Economic advantages – Possibility of financial contribution from the Club.
- Economic disadvantages – Large unbudgeted expense for the Council.
- Environmental advantages – As above.
- Environmental disadvantages – As above.
- Social advantages – Retain Council management of the site, public access, pedestrian and cycle links through to the main part of Cuthberts Green, and provision of other public recreation facilities as required.
- Social disadvantages – Recreation potential of the existing trees would be lost. The site would be more exposed to the prevailing easterly winds.

(e) Funding

The proposed developments have been estimated at a cost of \$343 000. This estimate includes upgrading the existing rugby field but does not include additional changing rooms.

Parks and Waterways Unit have no funding currently available for this proposal. Funding is allocated to developing approximately one sports field per year. This has been tagged for other projects until 2005/06.

Possibilities for funding the proposal as a Council development (Option iii) are:

- (i) The Council makes a bid through the Annual Plan process for additional funding or substitutions for the proposal.
- (ii) The Club and the Council enter a partnership to source funds for the development. Any funding that comes from grants or sponsorship goes directly towards development costs, any funding that comes from Club funds is paid back by the Council as budget allows.

CONSULTATION

The proposal has been discussed with Canterbury Indoor Bowls who has a large indoor facility adjacent to the site. Canterbury Indoor Bowls supports the proposal and is interested in exploring opportunities for sharing resources with the Linfield Club.

It is proposed to undertake consultation by inviting identified stakeholders to a presentation at the Linwood Rugby clubrooms. Copies of the concept plan will be available for people to take away after the meeting and will also be available at the Linwood Service Centre for people to make written submissions on.

Results of the consultation will be reported back to the Board.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposal presents an opportunity for the Council to work together with an established sports club to encourage club amalgamation and to enhance the sport and recreation opportunities in the area. As the proposal is not currently budgeted for as a Council development, further work is required on possible funding options.

Staff

- Recommendation:**
1. That the Board support in principle the proposal for the Council to develop the site with a view to allocating the sports fields to the Linfield Club (Option iii).
 2. That staff undertake consultation on the proposal and further explore funding options for reporting back to the Board.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: That the recommendations be adopted and the respective clubs commended on their involvement in this initiative, and their decision to amalgamate.