

5. IMPLICATIONS ON STATISTICAL INFORMATION

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The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee on implications for urban growth of the changes to Christchurch's population reported on at the November meeting.

INTRODUCTION

At its 27 November 2002 meeting the Committee received two reports on Christchurch's population; internal migration flows; and latest population estimates. The Chairperson's recommendation was that the implications on the latter report be presented in the New Year. In the discussions on these reports specific information was sought on the planning issues including the cross boundary issues arising from internal migration. This report discusses these matters and makes recommendation on possible steps that should be taken.

The planning implications of population growth cannot be analysed in isolation from other related demographic changes affecting the City, particularly age structure and household growth. The scope of the report has therefore been broadened to take into account these other factors.

HOW POPULATION AFFECTS URBAN GROWTH

Obviously, as the population grows more demands are placed on the City's natural and physical resources, such as land, water, infrastructure and community facilities. These demands can have costs and benefits, but needs be managed through sustainable resource management practices, including conservation, waste minimisation, and public transport use. There is no practical policy that would support a 'population ceiling' but there are population 'thresholds' beyond which significant servicing costs could be incurred, or conversely, benefits obtained from economies of scale (for example a larger domestic market for local industry).

The two drivers of population growth are natural increase and migration. Natural increase is predictable in the long term and can be accommodated relatively easily given Christchurch's age structure. By contrast, immigration is relatively unpredictable within the short term. It is influenced by a broad range of factors such as government policy, economic conditions and global stability. Therefore, there is no excuse for planning not being able to keep ahead of changes brought about by natural increase, but it is usually reactive to fluctuations in migration. However even the fluctuations in migration can be handled if planning takes a long term view and is flexible enough to take account of changing conditions.

It is not just the quantum in population growth that may need a Council response. The rate of growth, its distribution, and relationship with age structure will all affect urban growth and the City's social, economic and environmental conditions. Just as importantly they will affect the location, timing and amount of Council expenditure on infrastructure to service that growth.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESIDENTIAL LAND DEMAND

The past decade has witnessed a significant increase in the demand for residential land, which has been brought about by periods of high regional economic growth, household growth, overseas immigration (relative to the previous ten years), and favourable interest rates.

In order to meet this demand the Council has zoned around 1200 hectares of 'greenbelt' land for housing since 1995, of which just over 300 hectares is still subject to Environment Court proceedings. Despite this additional land, there is still only 1280 hectares of vacant residential land (June 2002) reflecting a sustained high rate of take up since 1995.

As development has increased on Greenfield sites the number of building consents issued for apartments, townhouses and 'infill' has plummeted from around 2400 in 1998 to a little over 400 in the year ending June 2002. This may suggest that the policy of urban consolidation is not working but more work needs to be done to ascertain this, for example analysis of the second hand housing and rental markets.

In summary, population growth and particularly immigration, over the past census period is underpinning (not surprisingly) the considerable amount of greenbelt development around the edge of the City. The implications of this is that, if the Council continues to promote immigration and business development for immigration reasons, it must have the forward planning in place and there needs to be an acceptance that, even with a successful 'consolidation' strategy rural land will continue to be urbanised.

CROSS BOUNDARY ISSUES

The population figures continue to reinforce the need for a closer relationship with our neighbouring Councils in managing urban growth, particularly Selwyn and Waimakariri. There are already joint projects in areas such as waste management and transport, but transport planning in particular needs to be complemented by compatible land use planning.

Traffic is the most pressing cross boundary issue needing attention. Table 1 shows the journey to work patterns for Christchurch and surrounding districts (2001), approximately half the people who live in Waimakariri District travel to work in Christchurch or Selwyn. As growth continues in adjoining districts, additional pressure will also come on the Councils other infrastructure such as sewerage, trunk water mains, as well as community facilities. This is not necessarily a bad thing as some services need more people to make them economic. However, if we are to accommodate further growth from outside the districts, this needs to be incorporated into asset management plans, early on, in order to provide the necessary capacities.

The current practice of making submissions on each other's district plans is reactive and counterproductive in that such submissions usually carry little statutory weight. The symbiotic relationship that exists between Christchurch and its neighbouring districts needs to be better reflected in plans and policy documents and given more weight in land use decisions than is currently the case. These matters have already been reported to this Committee and discussions are occurring with Selwyn and Waimakariri at officer level to find ways of progressing the matter.

Usual Residence	Work Place location											Total
	Waimakariri District	Christchurch City	Banks Peninsula District	Selwyn District	Ashburton District	Timaru District	Mackenzie District	Waimate District	Canterbury Region not further defined	Other (2)		
Total Waimakariri District	7,686	7,416	33	117	30	6	6	0	315	2,835	18,438	
Total Christchurch City	1,125	123,687	825	2,118	177	81	30	9	1,461	21,720	151,230	
Total Banks Peninsula District	3	1,671	1,680	60	3	3	3	0	33	570	4,029	
Total Selwyn District	48	5,463	30	7,137	96	6	3	0	237	1,989	15,012	

Table 1

(Note: The figures need to be read horizontally. For example of the 18,438 people in the workforce in Waimakariri District, 7,686 work in Waimakariri District, 7,416 in Christchurch City, etc).

IMPACT OF AGEING

While not explicitly dealt with in the previous reports, the City's age structure will, despite immigration, dominate demographic trends over the next ten years and beyond.

The ageing of the population will be the dominant demographic feature affecting Christchurch's growth over the next ten to thirty years. There are major challenges looming for the city and as the 'baby boom cohort' enters the 65 plus age group. Many of these challenges will relate to social issues, thus there will be implications for housing and land use planning generally. The precise effects will be uncertain because the social and economic profile of the future elderly will be vastly different from the present, and the Council and social agencies will need to be proactive in the way they respond to these emerging demographic trends.

Ageing population and decreasing average household size were major influences in the Council's decision to adopt its consolidation policy in Volume 2 of the Proposed City Plan. Maintaining a compact urban form, and discouraging the outward spread of urban development were seen as essential for ensuring that the growing numbers of elderly people would have good access to facilities, social networks, and family. As the population bulge enters the 65 plus age bracket the need to have a sizeable housing stock located close to amenities such as shops, medical facilities and community facilities (churches, halls etc) will become paramount.

In the past, it can be argued that insufficient attention has been paid to social issues in the planning of urban development. In the future social policy, particularly in relation to the changing demographic profile of the city's population, will need to be more prominent in any strategy developed to guide the city's future growth.

KEY ISSUES AFFECTING COUNCIL'S ABILITY TO HANDLE POPULATION GROWTH

The Council has the ability, for example, through the Resource Management Act and the Local Government Act, to have a significant influence on the form and direction of future growth. However, it cannot do this by itself. It needs the cooperation of its surrounding territorial neighbours, Ecan and government agencies. Without this cooperation, actions that the Council may take can be negated by those of the other parties, as has occurred in the relocation of the Christchurch railway station, the closure of Wigram airfield, and deferment of the southern arterial, all of which have major policy implications for Christchurch.

Developing external relations is therefore a fundamental prerequisite for influencing urban growth in the future. The City needs to develop a coherent strategy for managing the future increase in population and household growth in consultation or partnership with neighbouring Councils and Ecan. Such a strategy will not be able to directly control or manage how much growth Christchurch gets, but it should seek to influence the location of that growth and to some extent, the timing.

The key issue is how such a strategy would be implemented. The Regional Policy Statement would normally be expected to play a pivotal role, but that document has been found by at least one Environment Court to be too general and largely ineffectual in managing urban growth.¹ If Christchurch wants to continue with a consolidation strategy it will need to consider what, if any, role the Regional Policy Statement will have.

Another issue is that not all parts of Christchurch will grow at the same rate. In fact, the opposite may be the case where some suburbs will actually decline as their population undergoes a transitional phase, for example from a family orientated suburb to one which is dominated by elderly people. Certain planning strategies, for example those that favour peripheral growth, may tend to aggravate neighbourhood decay.

CONCLUSIONS

The extent to which Christchurch's population grows is dependant on the number of overseas and internal migrants it attracts relative to residents leaving the city. Unlike demographic changes created by age structure, this factor is difficult to predict and is prone to sharp fluctuations over short periods. However, there is no reason why robust long-term planning policies cannot accommodate these trends.

More urgent for the Council is to address the effects of population growth in the surrounding districts, particularly implications for traffic growth. Council staff are already in dialogue with its neighbouring Councils on these issues, but to date, there has been little commitment by the Councils affected to undertaking the joint planning needed to deal with these cross boundary issues.

There is no 'silver bullet' for managing urban growth. No matter which option or group of options is adopted, there will be conflicting views and trade-offs that need to be balanced up.

Staff

Recommendation: For discussion.

Chairman's

Recommendation:

1. That the information be received.
2. That the information and issues raised and particularly those to do with cross boundary growth and demographic change be taken into consideration in designing the urban growth strategy.

¹ Judge Treadwell in the Pegasus Bay decision (ref)