

2. MEMORIAL/RUSSLEY/HAWTHORNDEN AREA PLAN UPDATE AND PROGRAMME

Officer responsible Director of Information and Planning Environmental Services Manager	Author Janine Sowerby, Senior Planner, City Development Group DDI 941 8814 Glenda Dixon, Planner, City Plan, DDI 941 6203
--	--

The purpose of this report is to update the Urban Planning and Growth Special Committee on progress with preparation of the Memorial/Russley/Hawthornden Area Plan (MRHAP), as per its resolution on 10 July 2003 that area plans be referred to it for consideration on an individual basis. A similar report was presented to the Fendalton/Waimairi Community Board on 5 August 2003. At present the MRHAP is a priority 2 in the list of priorities for area plan preparation adopted by the Committee and the Council on 10 July 2003 and 24 July 2003 respectively.

BACKGROUND

The future of undeveloped land on the city side of Russley Road between Memorial Ave, Avonhead Park and Hawthornden Road/Withells Road is being looked at by the City Council, in consultation with the community. It is preparing an area plan in response to references (appeals) to the Environment Court against Council decisions in 1999 to keep the bulk of the study area in rural zoning and the remainder in low-density residential zoning.

Area Plans are a non-statutory/informal process for planning for the future use of large areas of land. In determining whether land is suitable for rezoning, they:

- Provide a framework for co-ordinated and comprehensive land use, environmental and social infrastructure planning in relation to a defined area;
- Identify and analyse the natural and physical constraints and opportunities presented by the land;
- Identify and reconcile (insofar as is possible) community aspirations with those constraints and opportunities;
- Evaluate the possible development options; and
- Provide recommendations as to how and when the preferred development option/s can be implemented in a cost-effective and timely manner.

In consultation with the community, the MRHAP will consider future land use options for the area within the parameters of the main issues of airport noise; future roading patterns, including the widening of and intersection improvements to Russley Road, and traffic generation; the provision of services (including water supply, sewerage and, in particular, storm water); maintenance of groundwater quality; character and amenity; and out of centre retailing. The main issues affecting the area are continuing to evolve.

MAIN ISSUES

The majority of the study area is within the 50 dBA Ldn, 55 dBA Ldn and composite 65 Ldn/95 SEL dBA airport noise contours (see attached map). Existing City Plan zonings and rules concerning subdivision and dwelling density discourage noise-sensitive land uses within these, thus limiting the resident population in the study area in order to minimise likely complaints about airport operations and to protect residential amenity. While the High Court has determined that it is not open to parties to seek to have the noise contours redrawn on the planning maps, completion of the Area Plan is dependent upon the Environment Court's decision on whether the 50 or 55 dBA Ldn noise contour should be the delimiter of noise-sensitive activities.

The timing of improvements to Russley Road in this vicinity is still unclear, with current priority being to improvements outside the study area. Transit New Zealand has not included any of the four-laning of SH1 (Carmen Road/Masham Road/Russley Road/Johns Road) in its ten-year programme, but indicatively the four-laning adjoining the MRH area is set down for 2013/14. However, a notice of requirement is expected within the next year for land to increase the capacity of the Russley Road/Memorial Ave roundabout. It may also seek to designate other land in the study area required to widen the existing 30m wide roading designation (eg where required to accommodate the proposed roundabout at the southern end of CIAL's designation).

Given the likely means of storm water disposal necessary, there is a potentially significant issue with respect to bird strike. Work will be continuing to establish the extent of risk in this particular area and how in broad terms storm water disposal could be designed to mitigate this. Potential regional and city policies and rules regarding the protection of groundwater quality are currently being progressed elsewhere (eg through the Natural Resources Regional Plan and Southwest Christchurch Area Plan) and this work will need to be translated back into the MRHAP in due course.

With respect to amenity there is a need for further work on a "gateway" concept for the Russley Road/Memorial Ave corner. Current landowner aspirations for out of centre retailing are being progressed through an application for a waiver to widen the scope of their reference to include business zoning, which has not yet been heard by the Environment Court. Settlement of the reference on this basis could not however be considered ahead of resolution of the noise contour issues; notification and progression of the forthcoming retail variation; and ideally, a draft area plan being completed.

PROCESS

Until such time as the Council has completed the MRHAP, its position is to defend its decisions made in 1999. Should any other future land use options be determined appropriate on resource management grounds, a decision to resile from those would have to be made by a Council Committee following consultation with all parties to the references, prior to the Council recommending to the Environment Court that the MRHAP form the basis for a variation to the Proposed City Plan. The MRHAP would also determine to what extent rezoning from rural to urban should occur and outline the timing and pattern of any development.

Area plan preparation is a 10-step process:

1. Update/collate/complete information base.
2. SWOT analysis.
3. Internal consultation with Council staff.
4. External consultation with community.
5. Develop and value future land use options.
6. Obtain more detailed information on component parts of preferred land use options.
7. Prepare implementation plan.
8. Prepare area plan.
9. Project closure.
10. Project review.

The first phase of community consultation (Step 4), to see how people see the study area developing (if at all) and to gather any other information that may help the Council to decide if the study area is suitable for rezoning, has been completed.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Although a non-statutory planning project, in accordance with the Council's Seeking Community Views Policy, community consultation was considered necessary to:

1. Alert the community to the fact that an Area Plan is being developed and explain what it is and why it is being developed.
2. Identify their values and aspirations (ie how the community would like to see the study area develop).
3. Gather any further information they may have that would assist the Council to determine whether the study area is suitable for urban rezoning.

Given number of people involved, in order to make consultation with the community manageable, the decision was made to consult first with:

1. Group 1 (landowners and occupiers in the study area) and Group 2 (other people/organisations with a specific interest in the study area, including immediately adjoining landowners and occupiers); then on the basis of more detailed information include;
2. Group 3 (landowners and occupiers in the wider vicinity).

Community consultation to date has involved:

- Early December 2002 and early February 2003 - 'profile raising' articles in the Christchurch City Scene.
- Late January/early February 2003 - information sent to, and opportunity for, Group 1 and 2 people to make initial written comments only, and advise whether they wished to be kept informed and/or meet to have their say.
- Ongoing responses to individual queries and individual meetings with key landowners and organisations.
- May/June 2003 - five meetings for Group 1 and 2 people to discuss the issues and respond to questions aimed at how everyone's different views might be brought together to set out principles for any rezoning and development that may occur. Attendance at the meetings varied from 17 to 99 people.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION SO FAR

While there was no overall consensus as to how people see the individual blocks and overall study area developing, with divergent views as to where the 'urban boundary' should be, some strong themes did emerge, including amongst others:

- The area has an environment with a rural or semi-rural character and recreational opportunities, which many people would like to preserve.
- Traffic noise, volumes and safety are more significant to many people than airport noise, at least at current noise levels.
- However, most people support the current operation of the airport and recognise its economic importance to the region.
- The Russley Road/Memorial Ave corner is a 'gateway' to the City and should be treated as such.

Useful comments were also made about possible mitigation measures if any rezoning and development did occur.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

The views expressed will assist staff during the next step in the process - development and evaluation of possible future land use options. Further community consultation in order to identify the preferred future land use option will include:

- A small representative group to discuss/comment upon details when developing and evaluating possible future land use options (including the option of no change) as necessary;
- Further City Scene articles and public meeting(s) when further input will be sought from the wider community as to the preferred future land use options developed.
- Formal/statutory consultation, submissions, hearing and references in association with preparation of any resulting variation to the Proposed City Plan if any rezoning is determined to be appropriate.

The MRHAP will include an appendix documenting the outcome of community consultation; whether it has been incorporated into the MRHAP; and, where it is unable to be incorporated, why not and where it has been redirected for action.

The community consultation with respect to the MRHAP has been the most comprehensive undertaken to date and is likely to provide the model for other area plans.

CONCLUSION

Because there are currently legal arguments in train about the information upon which the noise contours were calculated, the hearing of the preliminary matter (whether the 50 or 55 dBA Ldn noise contour should be the delimiter of noise-sensitive activities) upon which completion of the MRHAP is dependent is now expected to begin in March 2004. Release of the decision may be some months thereafter. The priority status of the MRHAP relative to the other area plans in the work programme will be reviewed at this time, in anticipation of the site-specific zoning references, including those relating to the Memorial/Russley/Hawthornden area, being heard in the third quarter of 2004 at the earliest.

Staff

- Recommendation:**
1. That the information be received.
 2. That the Committee invites other elected members to a seminar once possible future land use options have been identified.

Chairman's

- Recommendation:** That the staff recommendation be adopted.