

3. SOUTH WEST CHRISTCHURCH AREA PLANS (SWAP)

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The purpose of this report is to:

- (a) Advise on progress with the South West Christchurch Area Plan (a “priority 1” Area Plan); and to
- (b) Advise on significant issues that still need to be resolved, and on how they are being addressed.

A presentation will be made to the Committee which will provide the opportunity for members to discuss issues and evaluate the contents of this report in more detail.

INTRODUCTION

Members are now familiar with the Area Plans Programme and Priorities that was adopted by Council in July this year. The South West Christchurch Area Plan (SWAP) is the largest and technically most complex of the programme. It embraces several urgent projects, discussed below, including the Southern Arterial, Awatea Variation, and the Cashmere Road Ponding Area. These projects sit within the wider context of the Upper Heathcote and Upper Halswell River catchments and are part of the City’s largest urban growth area. The study area extends from Cashmere to Yaldhurst, and extends over part of the Upper Halswell catchment into Selwyn District. (Figure 1).

PROPOSED CITY PLAN

The proposed City Plan as notified in 1995 included a policy (6.3.16) that promoted the Halswell-Wigram-Kennedy’s Bush area for major urban expansion subject to further investigations into such matters as flood plain management and the Southern Arterial designation being undertaken. The policy attracted several submissions seeking substantial residential development, as well as a considerable number of submissions opposing any such development. After considering all the evidence, the Hearings Panel rezoned several hundred hectares of land for urban purposes. Those areas rezoned were:

- Aidanfields (175 hectares).
- Milns - Sparks Road around the Halswell Domain (75 hectares).
- Awatea (180 hectares).
- Parts of the Wigram Aerodrome (approximately 40 hectares).
- Kennedys Bush (approximately 100 hectares).

Since the decisions were released, other land has been rezoned either by the Environment Court or through consent orders negotiated with landowners. These include around 50 hectares in the vicinity of Glovers Road and approximately 14 hectares near Sabys Road.

Depending on densities and the amount of land set aside for other uses such as open space and industrial, there is enough land committed to house upwards of 10,000 people. In addition there is a strong likelihood that other landowners will be seeking further rezoning once the plan becomes operative.

PLANNING ISSUES

At the time of the hearings there was no overall master plan to guide all of this development. Decisions were therefore made in accordance with procedures under the RMA, but on a submission by submission basis creating potential problems for integrating development, recovering costs, and providing an adequate road network, community facilities, and other infrastructure. There are particular challenges in creating an integrated surface water management system for the entire area at the subdivision stage.

Many of the planning issues were set out in Mr Mountford's report on the Awatea variation presented to the Regulatory and Consents Committee on 6 October 2003 (Item 4). That report highlighted issues such as:

- Implications for development and the delaying of the building of the Southern Arterial;
- The identification and rehabilitation of contaminated sites and former landfills;
- Managing the volumes and quality of stormwater runoff.

In addition to these one can see other issues looming including:

- The effect on the surface water environment and roading network of developing the Wigram Aerodrome for urban purposes.
- The protection of the storage capacity provided by the Cashmere Ponding Area.
- Long term solutions for disposing stormwater from the Aidanfields development.
- Need to provide accessible and viable community facilities, including at least one primary school.

The overriding challenge from all of this is to deal with these matters in an integrated and co-ordinated manner so that future communities are able to be serviced efficiently and further development is not unnecessarily delayed.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

(a) Structures and Timetable

The project has three sections of work as shown in Figure 2 attached. A project manager has been appointed to oversee both the project as a whole and the work to be undertaken relating to surface water management, reporting to a Project Control Group. A project management plan has been prepared to ensure that there is adequate and effective coordination between the different teams and the Project Control Group for what is a large and complex project. The programme anticipates a preferred concept plan will be ready to report back to this committee in August 2004.

(b) Report and Process

Elected Member direction is essential if this and other Area Plans are to achieve their objectives and secure their intended outcomes. Progress on the SWAP will be reported to the Urban Planning and Growth Committee and relevant Community Boards for information and endorsement at least every six months, or when key milestones are reached. These milestones include matters such as reports on finding from investigations and consultation; identification of preferred land use options; and identification of methods for implementation such as plan changes, new capital expenditure, and adoption of final plan. Table 1 (attached) illustrates the reporting process in for the next six months. A seminar has recently been held with the Riccarton/Wigram Community Board, and a communication process has been established with relevant Council, as well as those at Environment Canterbury and Transit. A process for consulting the wider community is currently being developed.

It is desirable that, by the end of November 2003, the Urban Planning and Growth Special Committee convenes a seminar for members from other affected Standing Committees to explain key issues driving the Area Plan, the process (including community consultation) and intended outcomes. Reports to other Standing Committees will subsequently be made as and when appropriate, but in particular:

- When a decision is needed by that committee to consider new Council expenditure;
- When additional investigations are required; and
- When other decisions or endorsements are needed.

When the Area Plan is completed it will be formally signed off and adopted by the Urban Planning and Growth Special Committee, and recommended to Council.

CONCLUSION

The SWAP covers an extensive area of urban and rural land that is undergoing significant change and this is likely to continue over the next 10 - 20 years. Several parts of the Council will have a significant role in managing the effects of this change or responding to it. It is vital therefore that steps are taken now to put in place the framework to guide decisions to ensure that they are made in an integrated manner. This is the purpose of the Area Plan.

The Area Plan was identified as being the highest priority of the programme for three main reasons.

1. There are several urgent matters in the area requiring immediate action including the result of some outstanding references on the City Plan, evaluating the implications of delaying construction for the Southern Arterial, and acquiring land for flood storage open space and other values.
2. The area is Christchurch's largest urban growth area and development is already occurring at a rapid rate.
3. Several large development companies have interests in the rural land surrounding Halswell and are likely to seek zoning changes within the next two or three years if not sooner, and the Council needs to be in a position to be able to assess these changes.

A considerable amount of information has already been collected and some broad "visions" have been prepared particularly in the Parks and Waterways area. These visions are being translated into policies and action plans as a matter of urgency.

Staff

Recommendation: That a seminar be convened for elected members of other standing committees before the end of November so that the issues in this report can be presented in more detail to members of the standing committees that are directly contributing to the outcomes of the SWAP.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That a Council seminar be convened for elected members including the Chairpersons of the Spreydon/Heathcote Community Board and Riccarton/Wigram Community Board at 12 noon on 28 November 2003, in order that issues included in the report can be presented in more detail particularly to members of the standing committees that are directly contributing to the outcomes of the South West Area Plans.