

7. NEW CEMETERY PURCHASE

The Committee considered a report as detailed below on the possible purchase of additional cemetery land in the city through strategic purchases.

“The purpose of this report is to seek the Council’s approval to acquire additional cemetery land in the city by strategic purchases. This will provide additional space required due to current lack of capacity.

INTRODUCTION

There are nine operating cemeteries in Christchurch which provide space for around 900 interments per year. The Annual Plan output purpose is to provide cemeteries for the interment of full burials and ashes to meet the demand of the city’s residents in accordance with the Burial and Cremations Act 1964.

There is currently a choice of a cemetery and location for the next of kin and relatives of the deceased with a final marked resting place, and the aim is to provide a restful and attractive environment in our cemeteries. The city’s cemeteries, whilst satisfying a community need, also create significant areas of open space.

CONTEXT

As identified through the Cemeteries Enhancement Programme reported to Parks & Recreation Committee in September 2000, several operating cemeteries are reaching capacity. This requires the allocation through the Annual Plan of sufficient funding to acquire at least two additional cemetery sites to serve the city’s future.

Under the Capital Programme, funds have been allowed under Capital Reserve Purchases for funds of \$520,200 in 2000/01 financial year, and \$520,200 in 2001/02 financial year.

Last year the cemetery funds were used to acquire a cemetery space at the Agricultural & Pastoral Association site in Wigram Road. This new cemetery site will service the growth of the south western area of the city and will be located between Wigram Road and the new Southern Motorway arterial.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Due to lack of space required in the north west and Belfast areas of the city, it is proposed to acquire two additional cemeteries of 4 ha, and 8 ha respectively, to cater for future needs. Given current use trends the aim is to provide land for the next twenty years. The cemetery proposed at Ryans Road would be developed more slowly as needed and as the capital programme allows because a new cemetery site is now provided in Halswell (Wigram as part of the agricultural and pastoral site purchase).

The purchase of both new sites exceeds the current funding available although it is proposed to re-subdivide the Marshlands Road site and sell one of the 4 ha lots thereby recovering some of the costs which brings the purchase to just over the 2001/02 budget provision. This funding will need to be carried forward to the 2002/03 Annual Plan year because of deferred settlement due to resource consents need to be obtained as a condition of purchase. Both sites will add to the future development of the cemeteries infrastructure.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

As part of Parks Asset Management Planning the need for the acquisition of additional cemetery land was identified. Therefore provision was made through the Parks and Waterways five year capital programme.

(a) A new cemetery located in the north western area is proposed

Avonhead Cemetery currently has approximately four years of interment space available based on current trends of around 100 full interments and 50 ashes interments per annum.

Waimairi Cemetery has been full since 1998 although around 200 new ashes plots have been provided but there is of course space for second interments. Both cemeteries have been popular due to their high quality landscape environment.

Therefore it is proposed to purchase and develop additional cemetery land at Ryans Road behind the Christchurch International Airport.

(b) **A new cemetery located in the Belfast area is proposed**

Belfast Cemetery currently has an expected life of two years based on current trends of around 60 full interments and 20 ashes interments per annum. This smaller cemetery of 2 ha has been very popular due to its rural setting and high quality landscaping.

It is therefore proposed to purchase and develop additional cemetery land at the northern end of Marshlands road beside Ouruhia Domain which is a pleasant park setting serving local needs and citywide needs such as organised picnics.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Proposed Ryans Road Site – North Western Area

On the corner of Pond and Ryans Roads, this site is within the airport noise contour zone and is sited at the north western end of the runway approach. This land area of twenty (20) acres (8.09) ha has two good road frontages and is still close to the Avonhead / Russley area of the city which has seen rapid growth in the last two decades. Although situated within the airport noise boundary and is on the aircraft approach slope boundary, we do not see this as a major impediment for the site. Noise could be an issue during services on site however and for visitors.

The land is zoned Rural 2 under the Proposed Christchurch City Plan and a significant area of land across Ryans Road is owned by Christchurch International Airport. This affords open space views and there is no likelihood of the cemetery being surrounded with rural development.

Initial ground tests have indicated that the soil is light sandy loam with a layer of shingle at 1 – 1.5 metres below ground level. Although very free draining the shingle layer will need further investigation regarding stability when excavating the graves. The Sandy loam has been used for horticulture cropping in the past and will support an amenity landscape necessary for good cemetery design and operation.

Proposed Marshland Road Ouruhia Area

Adjoining Ouruhia Domain this rural site zoned Rural 3 under the Proposed Christchurch City Plan with a connection to Ouruhia Domain and road frontage onto Marshland Rad, the site will provide an open space amenity in an area that will be subject to growth. Only 4 ha adjoining the domain is required for cemetery, the rest being surplus to requirements.

Soil tests indicate that the water table during summer months is very low at around 2.5 metres and being sand silt loam is free draining. A ground water base log in Belfast does indicate significant fluctuations in water table levels between summer and winter months. The site is currently used for horticulture crops and the loamy topsoil is ideal for amenity landscaping necessary for good cemetery design and landscaping.”

The Committee **received** the information. Additional information on this topic is also provided in the public excluded section of the agenda.