

2. BELFAST AREA PLAN

Officer responsible
Area Planning Team Leader

Author
Matt Bonis, Senior Planner, DDI 941-8878

The purpose of this report is to:

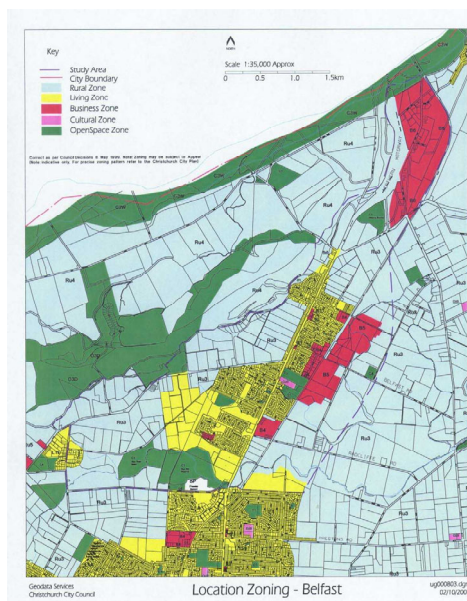
- (a) Advise on progress with the Belfast Area Plan (a 'priority 1' Area Plan); and to
- (b) Advise on significant issues that still need to be resolved, and on how they are being addressed.

A presentation was made to the Committee which provided 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 were adopted by Council in July this year. The Belfast Area Plan is considered to be one of the immediate priority areas for the Council's attention. There is a high degree of complexity with both land use, roading, and infrastructure that has merited immediate scrutiny by the Area Plans Team. It embraces several urgent projects, discussed below, including the recommendations from the Northern Roothing Options Strategy (NROSS) s293 Environment Court proceedings on a 93ha block between Johns Road and Main North Road and capacity of the sewage network for the area. The study area extends from Styx Mill Road to the SH1 Motorway, and from west to east from the Groynes through to the Northern Bypass designation. (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - The Belfast Area Plan (Study Area)



PROPOSED CITY PLAN

The proposed City Plan as amended by decisions in 1999 included a policy (6.3.16) that provided for large scale urban expansion at Belfast following several submissions seeking substantial residential development. Those areas rezoned were:

- Northwood (121.22 hectares – L1, with some higher density L3).
- Rushmore Drive (8.53 hectares, L1).
- Supa Centa (approximately 3 hectares, B4)

Policy 6.3.16 was subsequently amended through consent order, focussing on investigating long term growth options, including those that will necessitate cooperation with adjoining districts and the Regional Council.

A submission, and subsequent reference, relating to 93ha of Rural 3 zoned land (Applefields/Devondale Block) sought to achieve a development potential allowing two hectare minimum lot sizes. At the Environment Court this relief was opposed by the Regional Council, but during cross examination both the Regional Council and City council planning witnesses suggested that the best long term use of the land would be residential. The Environment Court subsequently provided an opportunity for the landowners of this block to pursue the potential for residential development (the Resource Management Act section 293 process). Residential development of this block could cater for approximately 3,000 additional people.

Should the rezoning of the s293 area be successful, there would be enough land committed to house a total population of around 10,000 people within Belfast. In addition there is a strong likelihood that other landowners will be seeking further rezoning once the plan becomes operative, both within the study area and on the periphery.

PLANNING ISSUES

At the time of the hearings there was no overall master plan to guide development within the Belfast area. 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. Clear mechanisms to ensure that individual developments would proceed along the lines put forward to the Council at the time of decisions, or at least providing a robust process for Council involvement to promote enhanced environmental outcomes, were also lacking. The Northwood development, by way of example, has been modified significantly from the initial urban design plans presented.

As a result, the process has been resource intensive for the Council and a robust testing as to whether the modifications have produced better environmental outcomes has never been comprehensively undertaken.

The planning issues identified to date include:

The Roothing and Highway Pattern

The NROSS report provided the following times for roading completion:

Project	Likely Timing	NROSS priority
Duplication of the Styx overbridge on Main North Road (SH74)	2003 / 2004	✓
Construction of the Northern Arterial	(10 – 20 years)	✓
Upgrading of Cranford Street	(0 to 10 years)	✓
Four laning of Johns Road (SH1)	2013	✗
A western bypass	Beyond 20 years	✗

This list does not indicate that some of these projects are unnecessary, but more that there is significant competition between roading projects. The issue facing the Council regarding this network is how far it should go to protect potential routes from intensification when these routes are outside the NROSS timeframes. In particular, the most efficient corridor for the Western Bypass is in danger of being developed through the intensification of Rosebank, and the s293 land. Further assessment is needed if the Council is to form its view on the protection of this corridor prior to the review of the s293 land use application.

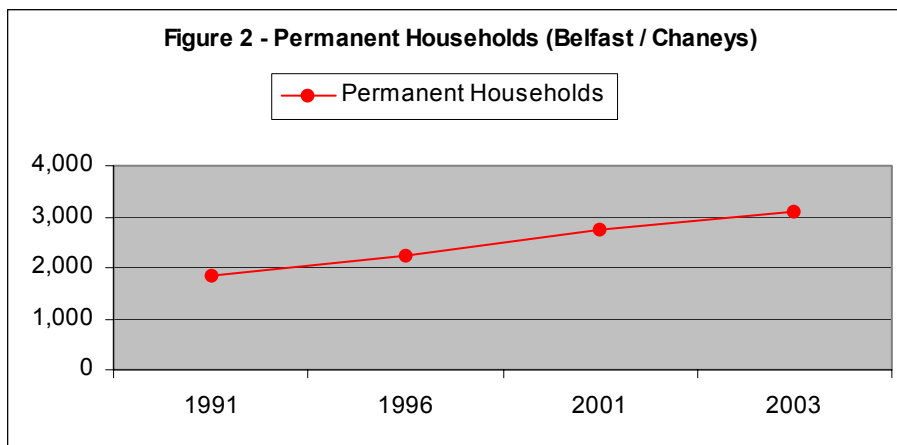
Wastewater Disposal

Domestic wastewater from Belfast (and Clearwater) is treated in a local pond system and the discharge consent for this process expires in 2010. Incorporating the completed Northwood development, capacity for this treatment plant will be reached. It is proposed by City Water and Waste that wastewater from Belfast be diverted to the Christchurch City treatment plant at Bromley, with construction of the works in the 2007/08 and 2009/10 financial years. This is subject to Council approval, and a final decision is expected to be made by a meeting of Council early next year. Until the construction of this pipeline to Bromley has taken place any potential intensification in this area of the City will need to be deferred.

Social Facilities and Focal Point

The average household size within Belfast is 2.63, compared to a City average of 2.47 (2001 Census, New Zealand Department of Statistics), illustrating the high proportion of family groups in this area. Increasing permanent household numbers (Figure 2), also reveal significant population growth in the area. Household formation and increased growth within Belfast will place pressures for family orientated community facilities and public spaces.

Recent residential developments and severance caused by the roading pattern has splintered the Belfast community. A central theme developed throughout the community consultation meetings, was that the Area Plan process should assist in facilitating a central 'focal point' for Belfast, promoting the ability to foster community spirit and developing a sense of place within the area. Discussions have been taking place with Libraries staff to analyse whether such a facility would be appropriate within this location to provide such a focus.



Industrial Development

The unconfined aquifer though the majority of the City means that Belfast/Chaneys area could be an option for major industrial expansion over the next 30 years.

Tangata Whenua Issues

Otukaikino Reserve is the most significant Tangata Whenua site in the area. Apart from a recommendation that the water quality of the area be improved, the remainder of the area has no other specific sites.

One area of concern is the name of the Kaputone Stream. "‘Kaputone’ is not a Maori word and neither does it break into words that make sense in Maori. Furthermore our tribal records do not mention a ‘Kaputone’. However, our records do mention a ‘Käputohi’.”¹

PPCS

The PPCS freezing works sites comprise the largest land holding within Belfast, and as such contain significant potential for the intensification of both residential and industrial development. Discharge consent for the freezing works to their own treatment facility ceases in 2008, and it is unlikely that the Regional Council will permit further discharge from the works to the same treatment methods. There may also be areas of soil contamination within the sites. Owing to obvious commercial sensitivities, PPCS has not revealed its long term intentions regarding the Belfast sites, although discussions with Council staff have been ongoing.

The Section 293 Process

As alluded to above, this process enables the land owners of the 93ha between Johns Road and Main North Road (refer Figure 1) to produce a comprehensive and binding outline plan for the development of this area, which will then be notified through the Environment Court. The decision from the Court alludes to such design matters as the opportunity for some higher density development, integration with the rest of Belfast, provision of a permanent rural/urban buffer and new urbanism.

¹ Rawiri Te Maire Tau. Belfast Cultural Assessment - 'Submission on Ouruhia'. September 2003.

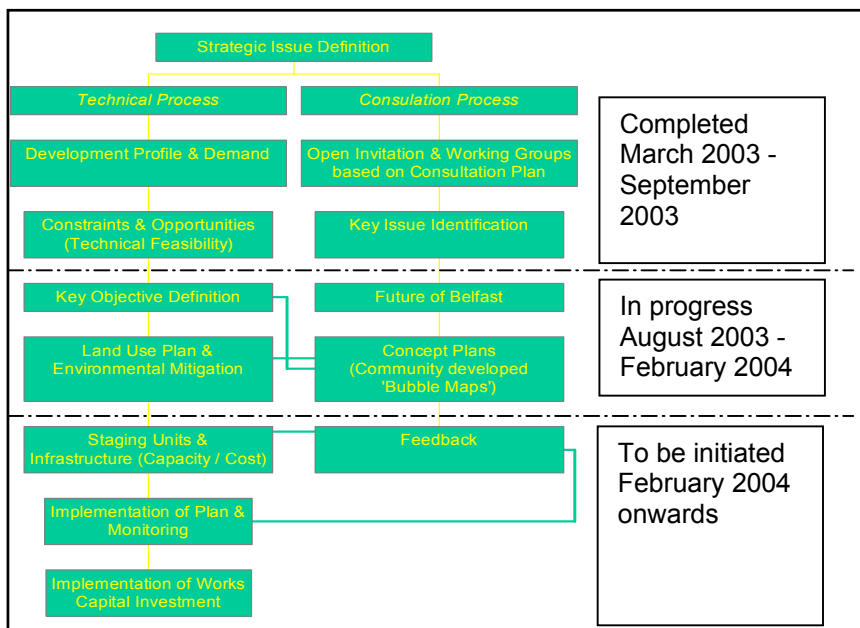
The process initiated by the landowners aimed to have an application notified by the end of November 2003. Council officers met with the developers and their consultants on 28 October 2003, and given the unfocused nature of process put forward by the landowners, it remains to be seen whether they will be in position to lodge an holistic application by the November timeframe.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

(a) Structures and Timetable

Figure 3 sets out the process that has been initiated in completing the Belfast Area Plan. The process splits the technical from the consultation aspects of developing the Area Plan and provides for feedback between the two. The programme anticipates a preferred concept plan will be ready to report back to this committee in February 2004.

Figure 3 - Belfast Area Plan Process



It is desirable that, towards the end of February 2004, the Urban Planning and Growth Special Committee convenes a seminar for members of other relevant standing committees to explain key issues driving the Area Plan, the process (including community consultation) and intended outcomes. Reports to these 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 submitted for formal sign off by the Urban Planning and Growth Special Committee, and recommendation to the Council for adoption.

CONCLUSION

The Belfast Area Plan 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. 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.

Recommendation:

1. That the information be received.
2. That a Council seminar be convened for elected members, including the Shirley/Papanui Community Board, before the end of February 2004, in order that the 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 Belfast Area Plan.