

7. LINFIELD CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL SPORTS CLUB PROPOSAL AT CUTHBERTS GREEN

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The purpose of this report is to report back on funding options for the development of sports fields on Council land at Kearneys Road and to seek approval to undertake community consultation on the proposal.

CONTEXT

A proposal for a sports field development at Kearneys Road, initiated by the Linfield Cultural and Recreational Sports Club, was reported to the Board on 4 June 2003. The Board resolved:

1. That the Board support in principle the proposal for the Council to develop the site at Cuthberts Green with a view to allocating the sports fields to the Linfield Club as outlined in option iii contained in clause 6 of the report.
2. That staff explore funding options for reporting back to the Board.

At its meeting on 11 June 2003, the Parks, Gardens and Waterways Committee decided:

1. To support further investigations by Council staff (including provisions for public access and appropriate buffer zones).
2. That Council staff further develop funding and development options.

1. Relevant Current Policy

- (a) Recreation and Sport Policy
The Christchurch City Council is committed to making a significant and sustainable contribution to the quality of life of its residents, particularly its children and youth, by supporting a broad range of recreation and sport services, facilities and programmes.
- (b) Physical Recreation and Sport Strategy
Moving together to provide a city where people participate and enjoy, and have the opportunity to perform and excel in physical recreation and sport.

2. Description Of The Proposal

The Linfield Cultural and Recreational Sports Club, incorporating Linwood Rugby Club, currently owns clubrooms and grounds on the western side of Kearneys Road and has an existing lease from the Council of the 1.5 hectare rugby field on the eastern side of Kearneys Road. This lease runs until 2012 with a right of renewal. The Club is proposing to develop new soccer and rugby fields, and a multi-use hard surface area utilising its existing lease area and the adjacent area of approximately 5.3 hectares. The area proposed for development is currently covered in poor quality forestry trees of very little economic and environmental value, but potentially high recreation value, and is fenced off from the main part of Cuthberts Green. It is a buffer zone for the adjacent oxidation ponds and is zoned Open Space 3 in the proposed City Plan.

Included in the proposal (see attached site development proposal plan LP 084802) are two soccer fields, two rugby fields, a junior rugby field, a multi-use hard surface area, and an extension to the changing rooms and toilets. Also included is a potential future play area.

According to the City Plan rules, approximately 64 car parks are required for the proposed development. The plan indicates 35 car parks to be formed on the road frontage, 36 car parks within the Bowls Association's currently under utilised car park, and an additional 26 parks to the south of the Bowls building in case they are required in the future. The Bowls Association currently has excess capacity available within their car park and Committee members from the Bowls Association have indicated that they would be agreeable, subject to their members approval, to negotiating a long term arrangement with the Linfield Club for car parking. A car park of 36 spaces, fenced off and with its own lockable gate, is shown on the plan within the Bowls Association's car park. It is preferable to make use of this existing car park rather than construct new car parking as it would save money and make more green space available for park activities.

3. Funding Options

The capital cost of the entire development is estimated to be in the vicinity of \$1.4 million. The Council would normally fund about half of this amount (the tree removal, development of the sports fields, irrigation, landscaping, footpaths, furniture, car parking, and playground) while the Club would be expected to fund the balance (multi use hard surface area, toilets, changing rooms and lighting). No funding is currently allocated within Council budgets for this proposed development. Three different funding options were investigated.

- (a) Substitution within Council budget
Staff investigated the possibility of substitution within the current budget. Over the next five years funding has been allocated to sports field development at Heathcote Valley and Halswell Domain. Both of these developments are considered to be of a higher priority than the Linfield project and are therefore not suitable for substitution. No other projects have been identified for substitution.
- (b) Future Council budget allocation
As Council budgets are already allocated for the next five years, the earliest this new project could be included in Council budgets is 2009/10, and then it would need to be staged over several years. This option would be subject to the annual budget process and may or not be approved. As there will need to be a two year settling period following development of the sports fields, the earliest the Club could use the fields would be 2011. The Club has indicated that the time delay is not conducive to development of their activities.
- (c) Club funds the capital development.
In order to allow the development to occur earlier, the Club is prepared to fund development of the sporting and related facilities themselves. They have proposed a partnership whereby the Club funds the capital development of the facilities in return for use rights, and that the Council undertakes ongoing maintenance of the fields which will be available for public use outside of Club activities. The Club will be responsible for ongoing maintenance and management of the building and hard surface area. The Council will support the development with technical advice and planning, and project management will be shared. The Council will share some of the landscaping costs following development of the sports fields, and will fund the proposed future play area.

The Club intends to cover the majority of the cost through the sale of the Rangers AFC land and buildings on McGregors Road. It should be noted that this site is zoned O3B and this will be reflected in its value. Until the sale takes place, the Club intends to borrow and secure finance over both the Rangers property and the Linfield Club's property on Kearneys Road. The Club also intends to apply for funding from the Lottery Grants Board, and the Gaming Society in particular who have indicated strong support for the concept. If sufficient funds are unable to be sourced, the project will not proceed.

4. Agreement for Club Use and Public Access

Staff have investigated the agreement that would be needed in order to facilitate option (c) as outlined above.

To set the process in motion and to further the aims and objectives of the proposal it is intended that a Memorandum of Understanding be entered into with the Club so that each party knows what is expected of the other, particularly the time in which the Club would be given (2 years is proposed) to secure funding for the development of the site. Once funding had been obtained a long term agreement would be entered into for the ongoing management of the site so that the Club had secure rights to the site not covered by the existing lease, which covers the area of the proposed hard surface area, junior rugby field, and changing rooms.

While detail has yet to be worked through with the Club, this agreement would principally cover such matters as:

- Development staging and standard
- Performance clauses
- Maintenance responsibility
- Outgoings
- Indemnity/Insurance
- Club rights of use and public casual use outside Club activities (i.e. similar to many other sports field allocations around the city)

- Ownership and compensation issues on termination

5. Consultation

The proposal has been discussed with Canterbury Indoor Bowls who have a large indoor facility adjacent to the site. They support the proposal and are interested in exploring opportunities for further co-operation with the Linfield Club.

Internal consultation has occurred with staff in the Greenspace, Community and Recreation, Transport and City Streets, City Water and Waste, and Facility Assets Units, all of whom support the proposal.

It is intended to undertake consultation with the community by informing them of the proposal through a letterbox drop, inviting people to attend a presentation at the Linwood Rugby clubrooms, and inviting feedback through written submissions. Copies of the concept plan will also be available at the Linwood Service Centre.

Results of the consultation will be reported back to the Board. If the community supports the proposal, then approval would be sought from the Board to proceed with developing an agreement with the Club so that they can seek funding for the development.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

The previous report outlined issues for consideration and advantages and disadvantages of the development. The current proposal (option (c)) reduces the financial implications to the Council in that capital funding requirements would be minimal. The Club would fund the bulk of the development and Council may contribute to some of the landscaping costs following development of the fields, and to construction of a future play area. Maintenance costs to Council would be about \$15 000 per year. At present, the site is grazed.

Currently, the city has excess capacity to cater for the demand for sports fields. However, fields are not always available close to clubrooms. The Club has identified a need for additional sports fields close to their current facilities in order to meet their own expanding activities.

The proposed partnership arrangement is unique. It is unusual for a sports club to fund development of sports fields that will be available for casual public use. Their interests, as well as those of the Council, will need to be protected through an agreed Memorandum of Understanding.

Approval of the proposal will allow the Club to expand their activities and to pursue amalgamation options with other clubs such as Rangers AFC.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposal presents an opportunity for Council to work together with an established sports club to encourage club amalgamation and to enhance the community driven sport opportunities in the area. As the Council is unable to fund the development in the short term, the Club's offer of capital development should be supported as a viable alternative.

Staff

Recommendation: That approval be given for community consultation to be undertaken on Linfield Cultural and Recreational Sports Club's proposal to develop sports facilities at Kearneys Road in accordance with the concept plan LP 084802 and that the results be reported back to the Board.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: For discussion.