

4. AREA PLANNING PROGRAMME

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The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on progress with the Area Plans Programme over the 2003/04 period.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1995 around 1,030 hectares of rural land at the edge of the urban area have been rezoned for residential development, and is either completed, currently being developed or needs subdivision approval. There is a further 330 hectares where the Council has indicated its support in principle, but requires further statutory approvals by the Council and/or Environment Court. In addition to these, the fate of a further 200 hectares is yet to be determined by the Court. Further to these again, there are also two or three rural areas of the City where landowners have unsuccessfully sought rezoning through the City Plan and/or Environment Court, but have informally indicated an intention to pursue the matter again, possibly leading to privately initiated plan changes.

As a result of this development, several parts of the urban edge are undergoing rapid environmental change and there are strong indications that both the magnitude and rate of the change will continue into the foreseeable future. The effects on natural and physical resources, and the wider Christchurch community, are long term and strategic in that they will have major implications for infrastructure programming, community development and management of the city's natural resources. The Area Plans Programme is the means by which this integration is to be carried out, and in recognition of this, the Council allocated an additional \$260,000 over 2003 - 2005. It is worth noting that, in some of its recent decisions on Greenfields rezoning proposals, the Environment Court has indicated a preference for new Greenfield development to be comprehensively planned along the lines of area plans.

AREA PLANS

An Area Plan is a document made up of maps, drawings and other information that provides a broad framework for guiding future land use change, particularly new urban growth areas. They will provide future land use options for these areas, identify the key constraints and opportunities, and clarify the implications and costs for providing physical and community infrastructure. This information can then be used to prepare subsequent planning guidance; structure plans which provide more details to enable services to be programme and costed; outline development plans to be included in the City Plan; and supplementary planning guidance on matters covering landscape design, surface water treatment etc.

Area Plans thus provide a framework for the integrated use, development and protection of natural and physical resources. Although prepared outside of the Resource Management Act (RMA) process, Area Plans will assist the Council in carrying out its functions under Section 31 of the RMA (integrated resource management).

AREA PLANS PROGRAMME AND PRIORITIES (APPP)

In 2003 an Area Plans Programme covering the next two years was adopted by the Council. The programme is divided into three levels of priority as shown in Attachment 1 to this report. A map showing all the areas is also attached (Attachment 2). The Council made provision in its Annual Plan to increase resources to enable this Area Plans Programme to be progressed.

The five areas that were identified as needing the most immediate attention at that time were:

1. Halswell-Wigram (south-west Christchurch).
2. Mairehau, south of QEII Drive between Philpotts Road and Hills Road.
3. 'Clearwater', from the Groynes to McLeans Island.
4. Cranford Basin, the rural area between Grassmere Street and Philpotts Road.
5. Belfast.

In some of these areas, eg Mairehau, the issues are relatively straightforward and confined to, for example, surface water matters. However, others such as the Clearwater, Halswell-Wigram and Belfast plans encompass several significant 'sub projects' that need their own management programme, and involve an array of issues, including some that affect neighbouring districts.

Progress

Progress on the respective plans has been variable, and dependent upon resources available. In some instances it has been useful to combine plans in order to deal with related issues in an integrated way. This has occurred with Cranford and Mairehau, and will probably be the case with Yaldhurst and Islington.

Attachment 1 provides an overview of current project status and the following are examples of the major achievements in the past 12 months:

- **South West Area Plan**

Most of the investigation work, and a considerable amount of public consultation, has been done on the South West Area Plan. The Council will be in a position to start acting on some long awaited outcomes like the Awatea Variation, former Wigram Airfield, Henderson's Basin, and surface water issues arising out of recent subdivisions by later this year. Consultation to date has included meetings with particular groups of landowners, and two very well attended public meetings. The project website has been created and has been well used by interested people. Early in the year a newsletter went to about 17,000 stakeholders with a follow-up in July 2004.

Alongside the general project there are a number of areas of special interest that receive individual attention including more focussed contact with affected landowners. These include Awatea, Wigram, South Halswell and Hendersons Basin, which is also a subject of Variation No 48 to the City Plan. The statutory process for that variation is currently underway and has an impact on the Area Plan project - Hendersons Basin is a significant consideration within any development proposal in the catchment of the Upper Heathcote River.

- **Belfast Area Plan**

Stages 1-5 of the area plan process were generally completed as at 30 June 2003 including:

- Completing the information base,
- SWOT analysis,
- Internal consultation with Council staff,
- External consultation with the community (first phase of community consultation),
- Technical analysis of constraints.

Achievements since 1 June 2003 have included (following the first phase of consultation):

- The second phase of consultation has been undertaken and has led to the development of 'bubble maps' for land use options.
- Both the Papanui/Shirley Community Board and the Urban Planning and Growth Special Committee have been updated as to progress and options;
- The Council passed a resolution (December 2003) to recognise the importance of the Western Belfast Bypass, contribute funding to the designation options analysis, and approach Transit to request that Transfund budget be incorporated within the options analysis;
- Discussions between Council Officers and section 293 (of the RMA) parties and their consultants to ensure adequate canvassing and analysis of physical and other constraints.
- Identification and evaluation of land use options, including the recognition of the green space elements necessary to be incorporated under public ownership as a part of the Green/Blue print for the area.

- **Area Plans Protocol**

An 'Area Plans Protocol' has been written to ensure there is a consistent and efficient process among business units for preparing these Plans. The key parts of the protocol are those which cover project management, consultation, reporting processes and the service levels among Council units. The protocol serves as a basis for 'best practice' in all these facets of Council planning and could be useful to other Council Units.

PRIORITIES

Area planning priorities are based on a number of criteria which are largely predicted on whether they are required to assist in the following (in rough order of importance):

- (a) Environment Court or Council hearings;
- (b) As a basis for variations or plan changes;
- (c) Providing a basis for capital spending or setting up cost share schemes in areas already committed for development;
- (d) Enabling the Council to respond to requests for privately requested plan changes as 'one Council' having done some preliminary work on the issues;
- (e) Investigating potential areas for future urban development.

Most of the area plan projects currently on the Priority 1 and 2 list meet several of these criteria while those identified as Priority 3 will meet (d) and (e).

Using this as a basis then the South-West and Belfast Area Plans remain as top priorities. Masham-Yaldhurst, Bridle Path Road and Memorial Russley also have the potential to become urgent depending on how the Environment Court or Council deal with these areas in hearings due to get underway. At the next level there are South Waimakariri (formerly Clearwater), Cranford-Mairehau and Styx-Harewood. The former two have progressed to the stage where many of the urgent matters have either been dealt with or overtaken. However, they still need to be completed. In the final group there are Brooklands, Burwood and Port Hills East. Islington and Port Hill West will be incorporated into other Area Plans.

The 'SWAP' continues to be the top priority for three reasons. Firstly, commitments the Council has made to residents in the area (eg Awatea Residents Association); secondly, the urgent need to implement floodplain mitigation measures and recover costs; and thirdly, the need to define long term growth opportunities. The last matter could be left to the Urban Development Strategy but in any event, much will hinge on the timing of constructing the Southern Arterial. An integrated catchment management plan is being prepared, and together with a green print, will identify open space that needs to be protected for recreation, flood mitigation, ecology and other values. In the long term much of the acquisition costs will be recovered from developer contributions, but there will be up-front costs that need to be set aside in the capital programme. The Greenspace Unit is expected to prepare a separate report on this in the near future.

CONCLUSION

A concerted effort is warranted over the next two years to ensure that committed and possible new development around the edge of the city occurs in an efficient, coherent and orderly fashion. There is also a need to ensure that the Council has given some thought as to how other areas of the urban edge might develop should they be approved, either through a plan change or as part of an urban development strategy. The work is essential for providing leadership to the asset management teams for their long term planning, but is proving resource intensive, both for those units and the Planning Strategy Team.

The priorities have only changed slightly with the South West and Belfast Plans continuing to be the most pressing. The need for urgent progress Yaldhurst - Islington and Memorial - Russley will depend on outcomes from Environment Court decisions, while work needs to start on the Styx Harewood Plan in light of the Environment Court's comments on zoning proposals in that area. Work will also progress on the plans that have already been started.

Staff

Recommendation: That the information be received.

Chairman's

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