

4. CHARLESTON NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPROVEMENT PLAN

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Corporate Plan Output: Environmental Improvement Plans	

The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee of the proposal to commence work on the Charleston Neighbourhood Plan.

NEIGHBOURHOOD IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIA) are older residential neighbourhoods identified as in need of revitalisation. Since 1987, the Environmental Policy and Planning Unit have been preparing Neighbourhood Improvement Plans (NIPs) for each NIA. The purpose of the NIP was to provide a framework for the enhancement of the public areas in a defined neighbourhood.

The scope of the NIP has since evolved, extending to cover not only public space and council initiatives, but also council/community partnerships, and methods to improve private property. To recognise the change in approach, the name of the Plan has been amended to Neighbourhood Plan.

There are a number of specific objectives that it is hoped will be met by the Neighbourhood Plans. They are:

- to improve the appearance and character of the neighbourhood areas through the development of streets and open spaces;
- to improve traffic circulation and safety;
- to improve pedestrian and landscape links between community facilities;
- to encourage good building and site design appropriate for the location;
- to provide a basis for both publicly funded projects and community self help and;
- to provide a means to co-ordinate various interests.

The St Albans Neighbourhood Plan, the most recent to be completed, was finalised in September this year. Copies of this plan will be available at the meeting as an example of the scope and content of a Neighbourhood Plan.

CHARLESTON BACKGROUND

During the early 1980s Charleston was an area identified for the Comprehensive Housing Improvement Programme (CHIP). This was a central government initiative providing financial support to local government improvement schemes, state housing, and the like. Some of this funding was used by Christchurch City Council to set up an information centre in the Charleston area offering practical advice and design help to homeowners wishing to improve their properties. The CHIP was generally regarded as a success.

Recently there has been a growing recognition that Charleston is again in need of some revitalisation. The effect of the redevelopment and popularity of Jade Stadium, industrial uses in the southern part of the suburb, and heavy traffic movement through the residential area have all culminated in conditions that have degraded the residential nature of the area.

A Neighbourhood Plan is suggested as an appropriate means to tackle some of these issues. The Charleston area is a well-defined community with much of the original character of the area remaining, but is at threat from industry and inappropriate redevelopment. Through the Neighbourhood Plan process there is the potential, with community acceptance and partnership, to be able to strengthen the community base and maintain the built character of the area, while tackling some of the problems noted above.

The boundaries of the Charleston Neighbourhood Plan are Ferry Road to the north, Ensors Road to the east, the railway lines to the south, and Wilsons Road to the west.

PROCESS OF PLAN PREPARATION

Over the years of preparing NIP's, both the process of preparation and the content of the plan have been refined. However, one of the major problems is still that public expectations are raised during the process, but implementation of the plan can only proceed as funds become available, which may be slow. Furthermore, some of the desires of the community may be beyond the scope of not only the Neighbourhood Plan, but also the Council as a whole. Therefore, it is essential through the process to be realistic about the possible outcomes.

As a first step, a large base map indicating streets, sections, community facilities, zoning etc has been prepared. A working group of officers has been established and have had an initial meeting, and walk around Charleston, to discuss the perceived problems, the character, and some ideas as to what would be appropriate, to the area. With this in mind the next step will be a meeting with the local community to listen to their views and expectations for the area. Following this meeting, a report of findings will be presented to the Community Board, with a view to establishing a process and timetable for further community involvement.

Recommendation: That the Committee supports the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Charleston area bounded by Ferry Road, Ensors Road, the railway lines to the south, and Wilsons Road.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the officer's recommendation be supported.