

10. HENDERSONS BASIN FLOOD PLAIN MANAGEMENT – HENDERSONS ROAD PURCHASE

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Corporate Plan Output: Waterways & Wetlands Protection Capital Works	

PURPOSE

This report is being referred to the Board for its comment and to the Parks, Gardens & Waterways Committee for its recommendation to the Council.

The purpose of this report is to enable the Council to consider the purchase of a low lying rural property in the naturally low lying and flood prone Hendersons Basin as part of a long term strategic plan for wise resource management in south west Christchurch.

INTRODUCTION

The property concerned is located in the lowest part of Hendersons Basin. Flooding occurs frequently and can reach a depth of 1200 mm (1.2m) in an extreme rainfall event.

The Proposed City Plan allows subdivision down to four hectares and the building of a house and other assets can be undertaken as of right under the rules applying to a Rural 2 Zone.

Councillors will recall that following the introduction of the proposed City Plan a Floodplain Management Strategy was adopted for the Heathcote River Catchment, jointly by the City Council and Regional Council. On the basis of detailed flood studies and economic assessments the importance of retaining and protecting in the longer term the natural ponding areas within the Cashmere Subcatchment was incorporated into the strategy. The strategy also recognised the need to review land use within Hendersons Basin in order to avoid the establishment of more assets within the ponding basin, (under the City Plan a further 25 dwellings would be permitted).

The Council's Asset Management Strategy for Waterways and Wetlands, adopted by the Council in October 2000 provides for surface water management in the Halswell/Wigram Urban Growth Area and the Cashmere Stream Ponding Area that includes the measures identified in the Heathcote Floodplain Management Strategy.

The Floodplain and Asset Management Strategies together with transport, public facilities and urban growth predictions have since been incorporated in an internal report entitled "South West Christchurch (Halswell-Wigram) Planning Study". It is intended to refer this report along with a proposed structure plan for parks, surface water management and transport to the Council within the next few months.

CONTEXT

At present the simplest way to describe the purchase is as a pre-emptive, strategic purchase that precludes the construction of a house or other assets in the low part of a natural ponding area. The purchase will help lay the foundation for a major surface water management scheme for urban growth in south west Christchurch that has been under investigation this year.

The scheme is designed to be an integral part of an open space framework that satisfies the needs of existing urban growth but also has the ability to expand to provide for urban growth in the longer term. This part of Christchurch district has the potential to provide for an additional 30,000 people accompanied by a total private investment of about \$1.6 billion.

The management of surface water and land use within Hendersons Basin is a significant component of the scheme. The Council's long term vision for Hendersons Basin is to concentrate residential development around the periphery of the ponding area and to create a green buffer between houses and ecologically important core habitats for plants and wildlife in the centre of the ponding area. Ideal uses for the green buffer would include grazing, a golf course or "carbon-sink planting".

Under Christchurch's current rate of urban growth the scheme would be implemented progressively over the next 20 years or so. During that period costs would be met by a variety of means. These include:

- Strategic purchases by the Council for the greater community good;
- On-going investment by the Council in more sustainable, multiple benefit ways of managing surface water under the Council's asset management strategy for waterways and wetlands;
- Reserves and reserve development funded by developers through reserve contributions;
- Development contributions to a surface water management scheme that achieves the floodplain management objectives of the City Council and Regional Council.
- Developer contributions to water quality management that would satisfy City Plan and Regional Plan resource management objectives and policies.

The benefits of the scheme include lower overall community cost, efficient use of public open space through multiple use, a multiple benefit integrated greenspace framework, much greater certainty for developers regarding resource consent requirements, their cost, and timing, and more importantly for the Council greater certainty about long term financial commitments.

Provided any strategic purchases by the Council are kept as fee simple land (i.e. not as reserve), the Council would have the ability to recover all of or part of the purchase cost as part of development levies and would also have the ability to sell surplus land for development.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council Asset Management, Strategy for Waterways & Wetlands provide for surface water management in the Halswell / Wigram Urban Growth area. The Cashmere stream ponding area includes the measures identified in the Heathcote Floodplain Management Strategy. This is a pre-emptive strategic purchase which will help lay the foundation for a major surface water management scheme for southwest Christchurch.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

Recently, the Council approved a non-complying residential subdivision at the corner of Hendersons Road and Cashmere Road. Five residential lots were permitted on flood-free land close to Cashmere Rd. As environmental compensation the subdividers offered a restrictive covenant on the balance low lying, flood prone, land that prevented any further subdivision or house building.

The Council will soon be required to respond to a reference to the Environment Court relating to land fronting Sparks Rd on the northern side of Hendersons Basin (Thacker reference). In this case all of the subject land lies within the ponding basin but the land owner is seeking 20% of the land as urban residential use with filling for the development coming from the balance land that would be created as Conservation Wetland. It is understood that the land owner has since verbally offered this land to the Council free of charge. High groundwater levels would nullify the creation of compensatory storage through excavation but it appears from investigation that compensatory storage could be located elsewhere in the Cashmere Stream catchment.

The reference is being opposed by ECan who, through another reference to the Environment Court are seeking a prohibition of any filling within the natural ponding areas in Christchurch District.

Provided the Regional Council agreed to a principle of compensatory of storage when filling is undertaken the issue would be satisfied by the proposed surface water management scheme for south west Christchurch.

An approach similar to the Thacker reference could be taken in response owners within Hendersons Basin and implemented under a Council policy and the granting of consents for non complying subdivision with appropriate conditions. (A City Plan Variation would offer far less flexibility and would be a lengthy and costly process.) Unfortunately, the approach would not be appropriate for the land recommended for purchase.

THE LAND RECOMMENDED FOR PURCHASE

The land is very low lying. It fronts Hendersons Road which passes through the middle of the ponding area. This road has been closed due to flooding in the past and would prevent access to people's homes if development was allowed. It is highly undesirable that a home be built on this particular piece of land.

Under the circumstances, the most appropriate action for the Council is to purchase the land that has been offered for sale as part of a strategy for urban development in south west Christchurch that will be presented to the Council within the next few months.

FUNDING

Provision has been included within the Parks & Waterways budget under Waterways and Wetlands Protection – Additional Strategic Purchases for which \$200,000 has been allowed for this financial year.

GENERAL

The property concerned is depicted on the attached plan and contains an area of 5.2406 ha. It has been on the market for sometime and was recently the subject of an offer which has subsequently fallen through. The Council has made an offer based upon an independent assessment undertaken on its behalf by Ford Baker Registered Public Valuers which has been accepted conditional upon Council approval by 28 June 2002. It is proposed to effect settlement by 30 June 2002. The full details of the property are included in the Public Excluded section of this report.

Recommendation: That the property be acquired on the terms and conditions contained in the Public Excluded section of this report.

Chairman's Recommendation: That the Officer's recommendation be adopted.