

12. 61 & 121 WIGRAM ROAD, WIGRAM - PROPOSED COUNCIL INITIATED PLAN CHANGE

General Manager responsible:	General Manager Strategy and Planning
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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. This report seeks a Council resolution directing staff to prepare a plan change to facilitate the re-use of Council-owned land at 61 & 121 Wigram Road.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The land at 61 Wigram Road contains the Canterbury A&P Association Showground, and 121 Wigram Road contains a retention basin (Refer to locality plan in **Attachment 1**). Both 61 & 121 Wigram Road are now split by the Christchurch Southern Motorway Stage 1 (CSM1) and this report deals with the 8.8 hectares of land on the northwest side of the designation (the 'subject land'), which is currently vacant.
3. Both properties are zoned Open Space 3C - Agribusiness Centre- (OS3C) in the City Plan. The immediate environment is a mixture of business and residential activities, including the former Wigram Airfield which is in the process of being developed for urban purposes pursuant to Plan Change 62. There is also a large area of Open Space 2 (District Recreation and Open Space) zoned land to the southeast (and on the south side of the CSM1 designation) which is used for equestrian activities.
4. It was intended to use 121 Wigram Road as a cemetery but investigations found that the groundwater level was too high for this use. The Team Leader Network Planning Greenspace has indicated that the land is unsuitable for recreational or other public open space and it is unlikely that any future owner would be interested in retaining the OS3C zoning. Therefore it is proposed to change the zoning to enable a more efficient use of the land to be established. The Business 4 (B4) zone is preferred (subject to a Section 32 analysis being undertaken) because it is compatible with surrounding business zones and its zone purpose is to provide a light industrial buffer between the heavier B5 Zones and Living Zones. The use of the subject land for residential activities is not recommended due to the site being substantially isolated by the CSM1 and adjoining business zones.
5. The options reasonably available to the Council are:
 - (a) Retain the land and OS3C zoning;
 - (b) Await the District Plan Review; or
 - (c) Rezone the land B4.
6. The Council needs to set aside considerations concerning any financial gain that might be derived from a change in zoning and focus on whether the current zone is the most effective and efficient means of achieving the purpose of the Resource Management Act 1991 (the Act), or whether some other zoning would be appropriate.
7. The relevant statutory documents are Proposed Change 1 to the Regional Policy Statement (PC1), the Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy (UDS), the South-West Area Plan (SWAP), and the City Plan. The site is within the urban limit as described in PC1 and development of the subject land would be part of the infill of the wider Wigram area as promoted in the above documents. Initial assessment by officers suggest that rezoning and development of the land for business purposes would not be incompatible with the policy direction of these documents.
8. Initial discussions with Council staff indicate that there are no specific servicing issues. The subject land would have good vehicle access to Wigram Road, and in the future good vehicle access to the CSM1 via the Curletts Road interchange.

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9. No geotechnical assessment has been done at the site following recent earthquakes. However, an assessment was made of the adjoining Wigram plan change site after the September 2010 quake and no significant issues were found to exist. A visual inspection of the subject land by planning officers found no visible geotechnical issues and little liquefaction or building damage was found to exist in the locality. The nearest red-stickered property is 1.3 kilometres southeast (on Halswell Road). Further technical studies on this and other issues would be carried out as part of preparing the plan change.
10. Rezoning the subject land would provide employment created by construction work, and subsequently increased employment on a more permanent basis. The provision of business land well within the urban limit and close a significant area of residential and future residential land and therefore consistent with the objectives of the statutory documents above. In terms of costs, there would be some upfront costs in preparing a plan change (as discussed below).
11. Council staff have concluded that promoting a Council initiated plan change is an appropriate option. There does not appear to be any particular resource management reason for not proceeding.

CONSULTATION

12. Various Council staff have provided advice on this proposal over several months. No external consultation has occurred. Once a decision is made to proceed, consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the First Schedule of the Act.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

13. Preparation of a plan change would likely cost between \$20,000 and \$30,000 depending on availability of expertise in-house.

Do the Recommendations of this Report Align with 2009-19 LTCCP budgets?

14. There is no specific budget provision for this Plan Change. However, several plan changes have been put on hold pending further investigations following the earthquakes, while others have not incurred the anticipated costs (for example Variation 8 to the Banks Peninsula District Plan – Financial Contributions - for which no submissions have been received). Given the particular features of this site, officers consider that the process for this plan change has a low financial impact in terms of the existing budget.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Have you considered the legal implications of the issue under consideration?

15. The process set out in the Resource Management Act must be followed and there are no particular legal implications provided the process is followed correctly.

ALIGNMENT WITH LTCCP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS

Do the recommendations of this report support a level of service or project in the 2009-19 LTCCP?

16. The project supports Activity Management Plan for 2009-19 LTCCP – Activity 1.3 District Plan – Preparing, maintaining, and reviewing the Christchurch City District Plan. However, this proposed work is not on the approved District Plan work programme.

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17. The Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy (UDS) seeks greater intensification and development in and around existing urban centres through containing urban growth within prescribed urban limits. The site is within the urban limits described in the UDS, SWAP, and subsequently in the decision on PC1. The recommendation aligns well with relevant Council strategies.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Council resolve to direct staff to prepare a Section 32 assessment and plan change to rezone the site to Business 4 (Suburban Industrial).

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BACKGROUND & DISCUSSION

18. The land at 61 Wigram Road contains the Canterbury Agricultural & Pastoral Association (A&P) Showground and 121 Wigram Road contains a retention basin. The land is owned by the Christchurch City Council and it had been intended to use part or all of 121 Wigram Road as a cemetery, but investigations found that the groundwater level was too high for this use. Both sites are now split by the Christchurch Southern Motorway Stage 1 (CSM1) designation and this report deals with the land on the northwest side of the designation. The strip varies from 20-90 metres in width and is about 850 metres long. The subject land is about 8.8 hectares in total and is vacant.
19. Both properties are currently zoned Open Space 3C (Agribusiness Centre) and are surrounded by a mixture of business and residential zones, including at the former Wigram Airfield, as well as Open Space 2 (District Recreation and Open Space). Business land in the vicinity are a mixture of Business 4 (Suburban Industrial) and Business 5 (General Industrial) zoning.
20. The Open Space 3C zone covers an area of land at Wigram comprising about 120 hectares, and is intended to enable the development of facilities serving the primary industries of Canterbury emphasising public displays, livestock sales, entertainment and business activities related to those functions. The City Plan states that the large area of the site provides the space to mitigate some of the adverse effects previously associated with A&P and Saleyard activities. Effects on adjoining activities will include an increase in traffic volumes and a range of noise generating activities.
21. The Council's property consultancy team advises that the subject land is surplus to requirements and is being considered for sale. The land cannot be used as a cemetery as intended, and the usefulness of the northwest part for stormwater retention infrastructure has been reduced by the CSM1 splitting the site.
22. The options reasonably available to the Council are:
 - (a) Retain the land and Open Space 3C zoning;
 - (b) Await the District Plan Review; or
 - (c) Rezone the land Business 4.
23. It is likely that any future owner of the subject land would seek to either obtain resource consent or a change in zoning to enable a more financially viable land use. This would increase the value of the land and have a developer profit from doing so.
24. A change to a B4 zoning has therefore been mooted. A business zone is preferred because the adjoining land is largely either Business 4 or Business 5 zone, and because of the relative isolation of the site. It is also considered prudent to locate a less noise-sensitive zone immediately adjacent to the CSM1.
25. Although there is likely to be a financial benefit to the Council in rezoning the land Business 4 before disposal, the Council must consider whether it is appropriate in planning terms to initiate a plan change. If a plan change was notified submissions would need to be heard by a commissioner.
26. The relevant statutory documents are Proposed Change 1 to the Regional Policy Statement (PC1), the Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy (UDS), the South-West Area Plan (SWAP), and the City Plan. Development of the subject land would be part of the consolidation of the wider Wigram area as promoted in these documents, although the site is only specifically identified for future development in the UDS and SWAP. The subject land is, however, within the urban limits described in PC1 and is not at this stage considered inconsistent with the objectives and policies PC1 seeks to introduce.

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27. The City Plan, Volume 2, contains objectives and policies which promote or would be achieved by urban consolidation, particularly at sections 3 (Energy) and 6 (Urban Growth). The subject land is consistent with objectives and policies in Section 6 relating to urban growth. It is likely that rezoning and development of the land could be supported in relation to these documents.
28. Initial discussions with Council staff indicates that there are no specific servicing issues, noting that part of 121 Wigram Road has been earmarked for a pump station associated with the Western Interceptor project. The subject land has good road access and the proximity of the CSM1 would be of benefit for commercial activities.
29. No geotechnical assessment has been done at the site following recent earthquakes. However, such assessments were made of the adjoining Wigram plan change site after the September 2010 quake and no significant issues were found to exist. A visual inspection of the site by planning officers found no visible geotechnical issues and little liquefaction or building damage was found to exist in the locality. The nearest red-stickered property is 1.3 kilometres southeast (on Halswell Road).
30. Rezoning the subject land is not likely to have any significant impact on the function of the Showgrounds, and vice versa. The interceding CSM1 will act as a buffer between these uses.

OPTIONS

Option (a) – retain the land and zoning

31. This option would maintain the status quo. The benefits of proceeding with this option are that the cost of preparing the plan change would be avoided, and that retention of the land would provide the Council with options in the future if a need for land in this area arose. The Council would, however, still own about 120 hectares of Open Space 3C or Open Space 2 zoned land in the area, although some of that land is used for the Showgrounds, equestrian use, and a stormwater retention basin.
32. However, there is no current or proposed use for this land and it is considered surplus to requirements. The benefits outlined in the table below would not be available under this option.

Option (b) – Await the District Plan Review

33. The District Plan Review, although delayed, will still proceed and proposed plan changes such as this could be addressed within the Review.
34. There are two reasons officers consider this option to be less efficient than undertaking a rezoning ahead of the Review. Firstly, there is an opportunity to develop the subject site and the adjoining former Wigram Airfield land at the same time and in an integrated manner. The possible development of the subject sit could also dovetail with construction of the CSM1 and linking of Wigram Road with Magdala Road. Secondly, there is increased demand for business land stemming from damage to commercial buildings from earthquakes.
35. The District Plan Review is likely to commence mid 2012 and the target is for notification within three years. The opportunities described above would be delayed and possibly lost and for this reason, option (b) is not preferred.

Option (c) – Rezone the land Business 4

37. The table below describes the resource management benefits and costs for the Council in rezoning the site Business 4. It is considered that the identified benefits outweigh the costs and that, in planning terms, there is sufficient merit to justify a more thorough Section 32 assessment with the view to initiating a plan change. There are also financial benefits for the Council in general in having the site zoned B4.

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Benefits	Costs
Employment in construction phase	Cost in preparing a plan change.
Permanent employment opportunities	Supply and cost of land in this area if the Council does need land in the future.
Accessible location within the urban limit.	
Consistency with Council policies and strategic documents.	
Enables a more efficient use of essentially vacant land within the urban area.	
Future use of land known at the time of sale.	

PREFERRED OPTION

That the Council resolve to direct staff to prepare a Section 32 assessment and plan change to rezone the site to B4 (Suburban Industrial).