

22. 9. 2011

9. 61 & 121 WIGRAM ROAD, WIGRAM - PROPOSED COUNCIL INITIATED PLAN CHANGE



General Manager responsible:	Acting General Manager Strategy and Planning, DDI 941-8177
Officer responsible:	Team Leader, District 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 being a part of 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 plans in **Attachments 1 and 1A**). 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'). The subject land is vacant and includes an access road from Wigram Road to the Canterbury Agricultural Park and the Haytons Stream swale.
3. Both properties are zoned Open Space 3C - Agribusiness Centre- (OS3C) in the City Plan, which provides for activities associated with the Agricultural Park. 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. A cemetery was considered for the subject land, following its purchase by the Council in 2001. Monitoring of ground water levels and movement over a two year period indicated a high water table for a significant period of the year and it was therefore concluded that a cemetery was not feasible on the site. The Team Leader Network Planning Greenspace has also advised that the ground conditions would not make this a preferred site for recreational or other public open space. Furthermore, the Team Leader Network Planning Greenspace has advised that there is a sufficient supply of sports parks at the current time, which will be increased as additional land for playing fields is provided in future subdivisions in the south west area. It is concluded that this will meet the existing and future demand arising from population growth.
5. The current zoning permits a limited number of activities, primarily associated with the Agricultural Park and it is therefore proposed to undertake a plan change to change the zoning to enable a more efficient use of the land. Business 4 (B4) is considered to be a suitable zoning because it is compatible with surrounding business zones to the north and south west of the site. It is also considered prudent to locate a less noise-sensitive zone immediately adjacent to the CSM1. However, other options will be explored as part of a Section 32 analysis for the plan change. 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.
6. The options reasonably available to the Council are:
 - a) Retain the Open Space 3C zoning;
 - b) Await the District Plan Review; or
 - c) Rezone the land to Business 4 (Suburban Industrial) or other appropriate zoning
7. 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.
8. 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.

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9. 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 Southern Motorway via the Curletts Road interchange.
10. 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 1.3km southeast (on Halswell Road). Further technical studies on this and other issues would be carried out as part of preparing the plan change.
11. 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 to a significant area of residential and future residential land would therefore be 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).
12. 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

13. Various Council staff have provided advice on this proposal over several months. In addition, staff presented to the Riccarton Wigram Community Board on 30 August 2011 with background information on the site and reasons for the recommended approach of undertaking a plan change. The Community Board expressed concerns with the proposal to undertake a plan change as it was considered the land could provide for playing fields until such time that other sports parks are developed and available for use. This is reflected in the recommendation of the Riccarton Wigram Community Board on this matter.
14. Once a decision is made to proceed, consultation will be undertaken in accordance with the First Schedule of the Act.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

15. Preparation of a plan change would likely cost between \$20000 and \$30000 depending on availability of expertise in-house.

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

16. 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?

17. The process set out in the RMA must be followed and there are no particular legal implications provided the process is followed correctly.

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ALIGNMENT WITH LTP AND ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT PLANS

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

18. The project supports Activity Management Plan for 2009-19 LTP – 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.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIES

Do the recommendations align with the Council's strategies?

19. 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:

- i) To direct staff to prepare a Section 32 assessment and Draft Plan Change to rezone the site to Business 4 (Suburban Industrial) or other appropriate zoning.
- ii) That staff report back to Council with a Draft Plan Change for adoption for notification.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION

That the Board opposes the Proposed Plan Change for 61 and 121 Wigram Road and recommend that the Council retains the present zoning as Open Space 3C until the District Plan Review or alternative sports grounds become available.

BACKGROUND & DISCUSSION

20. 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 with the A&P Association using the Agricultural Park for one month a year for its annual show. 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.
21. Both properties are currently zoned Open Space 3C (Agribusiness Centre) and are surrounded by a mixture of business and residential zones, including the former Wigram Airfield (zoned Living G and Business 4) to the north west, and Open Space 2 (District Recreation and Open Space) to the south. Business land in the vicinity of the subject site is a mixture of Business 4 (Suburban Industrial) to the north west and Business 5 (General Industrial) to the north.
22. 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 and activities serving the primary industries of Canterbury including public displays, livestock sales, entertainment and business activities related to those functions. Having regard to activities considered for the site, the City Plan permits the use of land and buildings for organised sports. However, this does not extend to other recreational activities or use as a cemetery, which resource consent or a plan change is required for.
23. 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 include an increase in traffic volumes and a range of noise generating activities.

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24. A section area of the subject land is within the scope of the Nga Puna Wai and Canterbury Agricultural Park Management Plan 2011, which includes an access road from Wigram Road to the Agricultural Park and the Haytons Stream Swale. The sections of the Management Plan most relevant to the subject land are included in **Attachment 2** to this report with a plan showing the area that the Management Plan relates to included as **Attachment 3**.
25. The Council's property consultancy team advised that the subject land is not required for use as part of the Canterbury Agricultural Park due to the severance of the site from the rest of the park arising from the development of CSM1.
26. A cemetery was considered for the subject land, following its purchase by the Council in 2001. Monitoring of ground water levels and movement over a two year period indicated a high water table for a significant period of the year and it was therefore concluded that a cemetery was not feasible on the site. The Team Leader Network Planning Greenspace has also advised that the ground conditions would not make this a preferred site for recreational or other public open space.
27. In considering the subject site for playing fields, the Team Leader Network Planning Greenspace has advised that there is a sufficient supply of sports parks to meet demand at the current time, which will be increased as additional land for playing fields is provided in future subdivisions in the south west area.
28. There are currently playing fields for sports at Canterbury Agricultural Park (currently used for Junior Rugby league) and Halswell Domain (including the recent addition of 11 hectares to the existing domain) with a proposed sports park of 4.5 ha including two full sized and one junior sports ground within the Wigram Ngai Tahu development. There is also the potential for development of Carrs Road reserve (12 ha) for playing fields with the relocation of the greyhound club and kart club and a proposed park (7 ha) within the Fulton Hogan subdivision on Halswell Junction Road.
29. The Council's Public Open Space Strategy has identified a target of 3.5 hectares of sports parks per 1,000 population by 2041 with work currently underway on an Outdoor Sports Land Plan that will identify how this is achieved. However, the Team Leader Network Planning Greenspace has advised that the existing provision and additional land proposed for sports parks will be sufficient to meet future needs in the south west area.
30. Having regard to the above, 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 to Business 4 (Suburban Industrial) or other appropriate zoning
31. Business 4 (B4) is considered to be a suitable zoning because it is compatible with surrounding business zones to the north and south west of the site. It is also considered prudent to locate a less noise-sensitive zone immediately adjacent to the CSM1. However, other options will be explored as part of a Section 32 analysis for the plan change.
32. 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.
33. 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.
34. 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.

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35. 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.
36. 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 1.3km southeast (on Halswell Road).
37. 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 existing zoning

38. 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 there would be options to Council in the use of the land for activities permitted by the City Plan. The benefits outlined in the table below would not be available under this option.

Option (b) – Await the District Plan Review

39. The District Plan Review, although delayed, will still proceed and proposed plan changes such as this could be addressed within the Review.
40. 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 site 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.
41. 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 or other appropriate zoning

42. 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.

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.	

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43. The alternative is to undertake a plan change to rezone the land to a zone other than Business 4, which the Council may consider appropriate.

PREFERRED OPTION

That the Council resolve to direct staff to prepare a s32 assessment and plan change to rezone the site to B4 (Suburban Industrial) or other appropriate zoning.