

CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL DRAFT LTCCP 2009
SUBMISSION BY BECKENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

INTRODUCTION

1 Notwithstanding some reservations, we think there is much to be positive about in this draft plan. We see it as offering good prospects for a sustainable future for our city in a number of key areas.

POSITIVE ASPECTS

2 This section of our submission addresses strategic issues first and more specific issues thereafter

Financial Strategy — Intergenerational Equity

3 We support the change in approach to intergenerational equity shown in the plan. In principle, where expenditure on major long-term projects is concerned, it seems to us to be perfectly justifiable to mitigate the short-term impact on rates by using debt to spread the cost over time so that that cost is in effect shared by those future residents and ratepayers who will enjoy the benefits of that expenditure once the projects in question are completed.

4 However, this change of approach does not absolve the Council from the responsibility to exercise prudence when considering what specific expenditures will be treated in this way. The need to prioritize may legitimately be regarded as less immediately pressing, but it should not be regarded as having disappeared. Future generations should not be irresponsibly compelled to shoulder intolerable burdens simply because they do not have votes in the here and now. This applies equally to borrowing from funds set aside for depreciation.

Proposed Charitable Trusts

5 We support the proposals to create an infrastructure charitable trust and a charitable trust for the implementation of the Council's Sustainable Energy Strategy, and we hope that the IRD will see fit to approve these proposals.

Refuse Minimisation and Disposal

6 We note the successful launch of the new bin system and support the strategy of which they form a part.

Water

7 We hope that, in the water supply strategy the Council is currently developing, it will give adequate recognition to the purity of Christchurch's water supply as a community asset that should not be compromised. We would prefer not to see charges introduced for water use by non-commercial users, but would support incentives for low water use (similar to the reduced tariff for low users of electricity).

Transport

8 We support the stated general aim of working to concentrate urban development in order to reduce the distances people have to travel to get to work, and maximise the potential for public transport use, walking and cycling.

9 Nevertheless, we suggest that the Council reconsider whether the proposed allocation of expenditure should not be modified so as to transfer some of the currently proposed \$663 million roading expenditure to footpaths and cycleways (current proposed expenditure just under \$68 million) and/or to public transport infrastructure (current proposed expenditure \$162 million).

10 As noted below (para. 15), we also have some reservations about the proposed tram route extension.

Urban Growth and Central City Revitalisation

11 We support the general thrust of what is proposed. A vibrant city centre that has a good business/residential mix and is interesting to visit will avoid the urban “hollow doughnut” syndrome and will ultimately benefit residents in general.

Proposed Transfer of Christchurch Town Hall to a Council Controlled Trading Organisation

12 This seems to us to be a sensible arrangement. Contrary to the view that seems to be favoured by the present central government, we generally support the concept of local government trading as undertaken by the Council.

Mid Heathcote Linear Park Masterplan

13 After the disappointment of seeing funding for the Heathcote River Vision project excluded from the 2006 LTCCP, we are delighted at the funding provision for this new plan, which will create a wonderful neighbourhood amenity while also, at a more practical level, addressing the need to replace trees and stabilise banks affected by erosion. We would like to thank our local councillors for their championing of this project, and to compliment them, and our Community Board members, for having ensured that the drafting of the masterplan took proper regard for the views of the community.

OTHER ASPECTS

Policy on Determining Significance

14 We have considerable misgivings about the proposal to change the current policy by removing financial thresholds. Quite apart from any question of confidence or otherwise in the current Council, we consider it undesirable for any local government body to arrogate to itself what seemingly amounts to unbounded freedom to act without consulting the public.

Proposed Extension of Central City Tram Route

15 This proposal is one that we think has some merit as regards the concept of creating a potential growth point for the development of light rail as a genuine addition to the public transport network rather than just as a tourist attraction. However, as proposed it seems more like a “nice-to-have” than a “need-to-have” idea — furthermore one whose contribution to a long-term public transport strategy needs to be further thought through. If the Council were looking for a candidate for deletion from the LTCCP in the interests of making savings, then we suggest this might be it.

Early Learning Centres

17 While the Council’s move from Tuam Street to its new headquarters will clearly make the Tuam Street centre superfluous, we are not persuaded by the case that has been made for the Council to outsource the QEII and Pioneer centres, and we would prefer to see these retained as Council operations rather than outsourced.

Edgware Pool Site

16 We understand that what is proposed conflicts with the prevailing view expressed by the local community regarding the future use of the site. Although it is located some distance from our neighbourhood, we comment on it because, if this is an example of how the Council proposes to ensure that “everybody actively participates in public decision-making” and that “everybody feels represented by their decision-makers”, then we find it less than reassuring.

Local Democracy

18 Even the Council's own figures show that, with only 48% of residents "satisfied that the Council makes decisions in the best interests of Christchurch", there is no room for complacency. It is therefore disappointing to see that the LTCCP appears to propose that nothing needs to be done to improve this — such as, for example, a strengthening of the role of Community Boards.

IN CONCLUSION

19 The presentation of information in the present draft LTCCP has been less than satisfactory (e.g. with details about funded capital expenditure projects omitted from the main document and only made available later); furthermore, the summary put out for the general public has been, in our view, even less satisfactory than in 2006. This leaves some room for questions as to the integrity and transparency of the consultation process.

20 Nevertheless, as far as we can tell, there is much to be welcomed in the draft. There is also room for improvement, and no doubt other submitters will add to the items we have mentioned under that heading.

21 We wish to be heard in respect of this submission.

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Submitted on behalf of the Beckenham Neighbourhood Incorporated

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