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**VICTORIA NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUP  
CHRISTCHURCH 8013**

Secretary: Dave Kelly, ph 3656-276, fax 3642-590.  
Coordinators: Joan Hazlehurst, ph 3650-115; Marjorie Manthei, ph 3669-076  
Postal address: 6 Beveridge St, Christchurch 8013.

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13 April, 2009

Christchurch City Council,  
PO Box 237  
Christchurch Mail Centre  
Christchurch 8140  
email [ccc-plan@ccc.govt.nz](mailto:ccc-plan@ccc.govt.nz)

Dear Sir/Madam

**RE: DRAFT LONG TERM COUNCIL COMMUNITY PLAN 2009-19  
SUBMISSION FROM VICTORIA NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUP**

- We do NOT wish to discuss our submission at the hearing.
- This submission is on behalf of Victoria Neighbourhood Group, which represents an area including about 450 dwellings and an active membership of about 30-40 residents.

**Introduction**

Thanks for the opportunity to make this submission on the LTCCP. The Victoria Neighbourhood Group is a residents group covering the area roughly bounded by Bealey Ave, Park Terrace, Salisbury St and Colombo St. Its aim is protection of residential amenity and the promotion of a livable, sustainable inner city.

**Specific points and changes requested**

**1. Reduce projected levels of borrowing.**

We are concerned at the proposal in the LTCCP to greatly increase Council debt from the current \$240M to a projected \$853M. We oppose this as it is very much easier to borrow money than to pay it back. Under this proposal at the end of the period there would be an ongoing cost of interest plus the need to repay capital. The total cost of projects greatly increases because of the interest costs. We oppose this and believe the CCC should reduce spending by deferring, downsizing, or cancelling some projects (specifics are suggested below).

**2. Reduce or defer some expensive projects.**

In light of our desire to not increase CCC borrowing much, we submit that a number of projects should be reduced or deferred. Probably the most important is roading (see next point) but there are several other obvious ways to save money. The \$11.5M for extending the tram should be reduced. We have watched with concern as various increasingly fanciful extensions are proposed for the tram all the way to CPIT and beyond. This tram is a modest tourist attraction on a small loop which

has helped Worcester Boulevard and may help City Mall. Going any further is a waste of money and will do nothing for transport, as well as requiring very messy turning solutions if it is extended down High Street. The Town Hall renovation (\$20M), Convention Centre extension (\$45M), and new Central Library building (\$83M) are all worthwhile but relatively non-urgent. Each could be delayed.

### **3. Make transport spending more sustainable by reducing (expensive) roading projects and increasing (cheap) sustainable projects.**

The VNG has long argued in favour of inner city living, reducing fossil fuel use in transport (with its associated noise, pollution and injury), and encouraging walking, cycling, and public transport. We strongly support the “key issues” in the CCC information documents about supporting cycling and walking and making the city more sustainable, but despite the claims this LTCCP seems to do the opposite. We are very upset at the largely unheralded shift in this LTCCP to spend nearly all the money on roads for motor vehicles. From a transport budget of \$663M, only about \$67M is identified as “active transport” but even this is misleading as most of this is for footpaths (\$50M) nearly all of which (\$48M) is for footpath resurfacing. It is good to resurface footpaths, but it’s hardly going to create a lot of new walking routes or deal with many of the difficult road crossing points that are current obstacles to safe and enjoyable walking. There is very little here that would actually encourage more people to walk. The cycling picture is also misleading and nearly all of the “new” cycling paths are associated with either the Southern Motorway (\$10M) or with bus lanes. Frankly, this is not the places that cycling needs facilities put in, these are only listed because work for cars or buses is going to take place there. Even worse, the money only needs to be spent because projects for cars or buses are going to make the roading environment more hostile for cyclists and pedestrians (such as the motorway cutting off current access routes) so this spending really should be seen as spending not for cycling, but on behalf of cars and buses. The new LTCCP leaves only about \$5M over 10 years for new cycleways in places chosen to give maximum benefit to cyclists, this is less than a third of recent budgets and is down from at least \$15M in the last LTCCP. These are huge cuts to an already very small budget – so the effect on cycling provision will be severe but the savings are not even very large!

Meantime the LTCCP is full of very expensive roading projects of questionable merit, such as \$19M to upgrade Cranford St and a long list of others. We consider that during the timeframe of this LTCCP (to 2019) global-warming-related requirements to reduce CO2 emissions, peak-oil-related price rises for fossil fuels, and obesity-related health concerns are going to **reduce** traffic, not allow it to increase. We saw a first glimpse of this through 2008 when petrol went over \$2 a litre – congestion was noticeable reduced. The shift in the LTCCP towards car-oriented roading projects is going in completely the wrong direction.

We strongly object to this emphasis on funding more roads, and **request that the LTCCP reduce spending on major roads** and use 3/4 of the savings to reduce borrowings and 1/4 of the savings to **restore the budgets for walking, cycling, and travel demand management**. Figures of \$10M for new walkways, and \$20M for new cycleways (excluding Southern Motorway and bus lanes) would be about right.

### **4. Do not sell Edgeware Pool site**

We think the Edgeware Pool debate has been marked by a very worrying appearance of rigidity on the part of the CCC. We do not support the site being sold until the CCC and local residents have been able to agree on what should happen on the site. Our concerns are less about the details of a local pool, but very much about the importance of proper engagement with local community groups.

#### **5. We have serious misgivings about the Infrastructure Trust**

The LTCCP proposes to set up an "infrastructure trust" apparently as a kind of tax shelter. Our group has strong misgivings about this proposal. You can either see this as making tax-efficient use of current legislation, or as a rort on the national tax base using a loophole. To the extent that it reduces the national tax base, it is a zero-sum game because someone has to pay for hospitals etc somehow. We acknowledge that there might be a local benefit which could reduce rates, but still don't feel easy about the proposal. We also find it hard to believe that the Government will not see this as an attack on the tax base and specifically outlaw it, which will make any CCC money spent setting up the Trust wasted. The whole deal smacks of the kind of creative accounting which has led to the financial meltdown globally, and while the VNG is not absolutely dead set against this, it really looks like sleight of hand rather than a genuine step forward.

#### **6. We vehemently oppose changes to the City Council "Policy for determining significance"**

The current policy requires council to consult under certain specified circumstances. We strongly oppose any attempt, like this one, to give the CCC more of a free hand to take major decisions in secret or without consultation. This is a democracy and we expect, we demand, to be consulted. The current and previous Councils have both seemed to think that coming to a "good" decision is all that matters. Actually, the way a decision is reached is as important as the "quality" of the final decision. See point 4 above re Edgeware Pool for an example.

#### **7. We support the proposed "Christchurch Agency for Energy Trust"**

We support this proposed agency, which looks like it could do useful work in decreasing the city's impact on the environment. We noted above in point 3 our concerns about global warming and the other effects of transport and so forth on the environment. Poorly insulated houses not only cause higher energy demands but also threaten the health of those living in them. Any approach that makes our city more energy efficient and more sustainable will contribute greatly to the long term goals supported by the VNG.

We thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Dave Kelly (secretary)  
for Victoria Neighbourhood Group

