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MEDIA STATEMENT

Environment Court considers making more land available for development in Greater Christchurch

A proposal to include additional greenfield land within the Greater Christchurch¹ Urban Development Strategy urban limit is being put before the Environment Court at a hearing in Queenstown. If the Court decides in favour of a revised urban limit, it could provide additional space for close to 5000 new homes, mostly in the east of Christchurch.

A number of parties had appealed against the Regional Policy Statement, Change 1 which gives statutory backing to the Urban Development Strategy. Prestons Road are seeking to include additional land within the UDS urban limit, a number of others, including Mills Hills (Highfield Park) to the east of the Prestons Road development had appealed mainly on the basis of sequencing - i.e. the timing that development in certain areas could occur.

The Urban Development Strategy partners² now support the inclusion of Preston's land within the urban limits and the changes in sequencing as agreed with individual appellants.

They worked to reach separate agreements with these ten landowners/developers prior to the start of the hearing, but the proposed agreements are still being considered by the Court.

Environment Canterbury Commissioner Peter Skelton says that the inclusion of additional land suitable for development in Greater Christchurch would be welcome news.

"Of course, urbanisation of any greenfield land within the urban limit would still be subject to a plan change process under the Christchurch City Plan and Selwyn and Waimakariri district plans. This is to ensure that infrastructure requirements integrate with existing and other planned developments and that any new or upgraded infrastructure is affordable to the community," he said.

Commissioner Skelton says that since the Urban Limit was set by the Change 1 decisions in September 2009, the urban planning issues facing Greater Christchurch have changed significantly.

Prior to the hearing, the Urban Development Strategy partners worked towards reaching agreements with ten of the property owners and developers³ who had appealed against Change 1 of the Regional Policy Statement. Draft consent orders for each proposed agreement were then submitted to the Court for consideration.

"Under the extraordinary circumstances following the earthquakes, the UDS partners made the pragmatic decision to review the urban limits in order to provide additional land for potential development. There was a clear need to review the urban limits once it became clear that some parts of Christchurch, particularly in the eastern suburbs, may no longer be suited for housing.

"The Urban Development Strategy has shown that it can be responsive to the changing needs of the community and has demonstrated its continuing relevance for the future of post-earthquake Greater Christchurch. The proposed new urban limit now rests with the Court."

Statement ends.

Supplementary information

¹ In terms of the Christchurch Earthquake Recovery Act, Greater Christchurch includes Christchurch City and Selwyn and Waimakariri districts.

² The UDS partners are Environment Canterbury, Christchurch City Council, Selwyn District Council, Waimakariri District Council and the NZ Transport Agency.

³ Settlements had been agreed between the UDS partners and a number of appellants prior to the start of the hearing. Whether to issue the consent orders necessary to confirm those agreements is now being considered by the Court. The appellants this affects are as follows: Prestons Road Ltd, Franco Farms, Case Family, Oakvale Farms Ltd, Fulton Hogan Ltd., National Investment Trust, Memorial Avenue Investments Ltd., Equus, Calder Stewart and Lincoln Land Development.

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