

Confidence high with Prestons suburb despite delays

While the developers of the dynamic new suburban centre of Prestons Road, on the northeastern outskirts of Christchurch, await a ruling on their Private Plan Change, their confidence remains high, despite delays in getting the consent notified.

The twin effects of a stagnant new-home building market and an accelerating migration flow into Canterbury mean that the area is likely to face a severe housing shortage in the near future.

According to the Urban Development Strategy (UDS), the population of greater Christchurch is expected to increase by 21 per cent to 501,300 by 2026 with a further 9 per cent increase to 548,520 by 2041, says John Lindsay, director of developer Prestons Road.

"This rapid expansion will put pressure on Christchurch's ability to cater for the extra 62,000 houses the city will need to accommodate the expected 120,000 extra people. These figures could be exacerbated if you consider the lack of new-home starts in the last 12 months, coupled with the fact that migration figures could approach record figures in the next one to two years.

"As developers, we have never been more confident about the future of Christchurch and Canterbury, and in the potential of Prestons," he says.

Situated 7.5 kilometres from Cathedral Square, the 203-hectare area, bounded by Mairehau Rd to the south and lower Styx to the north and bisected by Prestons Rd, will ultimately house 6000 people in 2500 homes. It will be a long-term multi-staged development.

Lindsay says Prestons is the first of a new generation of sustainable communities that will create an integrated sustainable urban suburb providing employment, schooling, housing, community and recreational facilities with an abundance of open space.

It will also link with the established infrastructure and the public-transport network as well as the recreational areas of Bottle Lake Forest and the two established golf courses of Waitikiri and Windsor.

"With an expected population of 6000 when completed, Prestons will have a vibrant town centre with a varied selection of cafes, restaurants, everyday conveniences and a neighbourhood supermarket.

"With a planned High St and civic square, other essentials such as medical facilities and childcare, a new primary school and office space for accountants, lawyers and other professionals will all be clustered around this central point.

"It will be a centre where people not only live, but also work and play. Ironically, this is exactly what Environment Canterbury is seeking to promote with the UDS," he says.

Prestons will provide a mix of housing types that reflect the future of Christchurch, including a diversity of section sizes.

"These residential buildings will include a sophisticated mix of stand-alone, semi-detached and terraced housing and the densities of these will also vary throughout the village, thus giving a mix of architecture. "The higher densities, characterised by



Civic village: Prestons will have a vibrant town centre, with apartments layered above a varied selection of cafes, restaurants and other retail outlets.

modern spacious apartments with balconies or courtyards, will fringe the High St area, with some actually layered above cafes and amenities, while the lower densities will be located along the eastern edge of the development, thereby creating a smooth transition between the surrounding farmlands and the built environment."

This mix of densities will mean that there are sufficient people to not only ensure the sustainability of the village but also act as a trigger for leisure activities and street life.

"Open space is another key to this development. While there is already an existing domain, the dominating feature of

the suburb will be the linear park that will run the entire length of the new suburb, linking the mix of residential and commercial facilities, as well as providing picnic areas, playgrounds and leisure facilities. The area will be further enhanced by the addition of walkways and cycle tracks," he says.

"Prestons has been meticulously planned, so that it will allow for the evolutionary development of the site over a considerable period of time, including market forces changes that could affect residential densities and commercial/retail uses. It will prove to be a great asset for Christchurch and Canterbury."



Overview: An aerial perspective shows the new suburban centre of Prestons planned for the northeastern outskirts of Christchurch.



Site inspection: Three directors of Prestons Road Ltd – David Schwartfeger, left, of Ngai Tahu Property, John Lindsay, of CDL Land New Zealand, and Roger Davidson, of Foodstuffs South Island – visit the site of the proposed Prestons development.

Eco-friendly township planned for outside the red lines of development

Christchurch's northeast, with its proximity to the central city and links to existing transport systems, is considered by many as an ideal area in which to create a new eco-friendly township to provide for the growth of the city.

However, according to John Lindsay, director of Prestons Road, these ideas are contrary to existing Canterbury Regional Council and Christchurch City Council thinking, which earmarks areas to the southwest for urban development, in preference to the northeast.

The promoters of Prestons Road have sought to challenge that thinking by becoming involved in the Regional Policy Statement Variation (RPS) hearings and applying for a Private Plan Change to

allow the development to proceed.

Lindsay says development plans for the greater Christchurch area are dictated at present by a series of red lines drawn on a map as part of the Urban Development Strategy. Prestons sits outside these lines.

"We believe that the thinking behind the positioning of the red lines is flawed. That is why we have got involved in the RPS hearings.

"When you compare the site for Prestons, which is excluded from the future development areas, with others which are included, it is difficult to see the logic," he says.

"Prestons is within 7.5 kilometres of the central business district, is on appropriate soils and would link in to the existing

infrastructure. In addition, it is a large area of land in single ownership, which would allow us to do some innovative and exciting things.

"To us, it is obvious that the benefits of Prestons far outweigh those of other areas inside the so-called red line."

One of the wider criticisms of the present planning is that the attempt to impose a green belt around the main urban settlements will ultimately have an inflationary effect on home affordability.

The Prestons site is also located in a popular area for homeowners.

Peter Cook, former owner of Simes Real Estate, says there is a current shortage of development land within this part of Christchurch.

Single ownership a great strength

One of the great strengths of Prestons Road is that most of the proposed 203-hectare site is in single ownership, which is in stark contrast with other potential development areas of Christchurch, where there are hundreds of different owners.

Backing this single ownership is the size, reputation and credibility of the shareholders of Prestons Road – Ngai Tahu Property, CDL Land New Zealand and Foodstuffs South Island.

Collectively, the companies' property and development portfolios are broad and cover land development (residential and rural), food sales (wholesale and retail), large format retail, commercial, industrial, a portfolio of

rural ground leases and farming operations.

A large proportion of their land development portfolio is concentrated in Canterbury and Christchurch, involving developments in Rolleston, Lincoln, Kaiapoi, Christchurch (central and suburbs) Hanmer Springs and Kaikoura.

Homeowners and builders will be able to buy with confidence at Prestons because of the control the company has over the majority of the land, says John Lindsay, director of Prestons Road.

"It means that we can take a long-term view of the development, while allowing us to be adventurous and innovative with

what we are trying to achieve at Prestons," he says.

"Our houses will incorporate five-star energy-rated designs, smarter water use will see water being recycled, there will be a strong emphasis on recycling and reducing waste, and each home will have access to fibre-optic technology.

"These are the things that strong shareholders can bring to the development."

Ngai Tahu Property and Foodstuffs are well-known names in Canterbury, and CDL Land New Zealand brings huge experience to the development at Prestons.

"CDL Land New Zealand has worked hard in the last 25 years to

earn and protect a reputation for producing high-quality residential developments across the country.

"They are a subsidiary of CDL Investments, which is listed on the New Zealand Stock Exchange, and 97 per cent of their shareholders are New Zealanders," he says.

"Together, all three parties that make up Prestons Road share in the same philosophy of wanting to create a suburban centre that has been designed with all the care in the world, one that will match the needs of the people with that of the environment and that will offer choices that are affordable today yet priceless for tomorrow," says Lindsay.

A new standard of urban living



Prestons



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