

executive summary

Background

The Ashburton Town Centre Concept Plan has been initiated as part of delivering the Ashburton Development Plan (adopted by Council in 2005). The Ashburton District Council has been assisted with developing the Concept Plan by Boffa Miskell - specialist planners, urban designers and landscape architects.

Purpose

The Concept Plan sets a broad framework for improvement, building on the good foundations of the existing town centre. This framework will take effect over many years and will have the flexibility to accommodate a range of new initiatives (only some of which are known today).

The Concept Plan aims to co-ordinate many of the individual actions and changes that can take place within the town centre, to create a strong focus for the social, civic, business, entertainment and living activities of the District and create a safer and more pleasant place for the future.

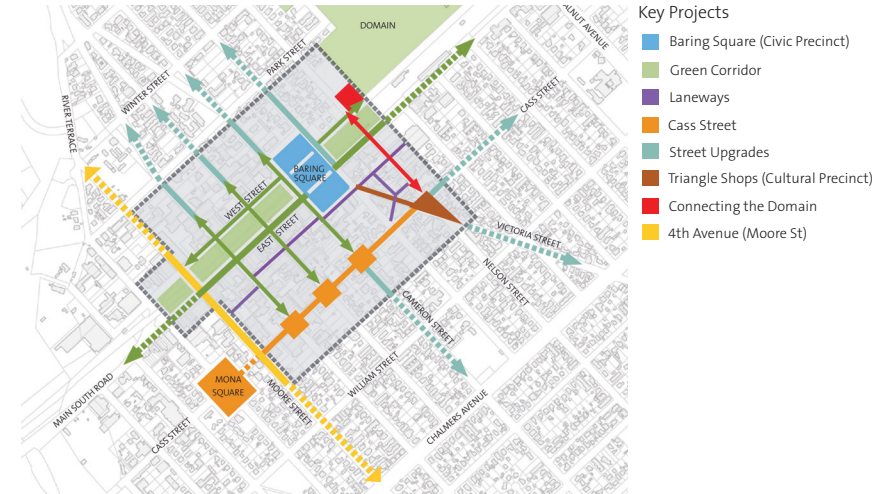
The Concept Plan provides a basis for Council investment in public land (squares, streets, parks); clear direction for private investment in new developments and business opportunities; and interest groups and resident can have some certainty as to the future shape and quality of the town centre's features they may value.

Concept Plan and Preliminary Design Option proposals

As Ashburton continues to grow, allowances will need to be made for expansion of the town centre. Three future growth options have been explored with the preferred option, the 'Integrated Core' that extends the town centre to the north and east, used as the basis for the Concept Plan proposals.

A number of key projects have been identified, covering much of the streetscape and public open spaces across the town centre. The Concept Plan illustrates how these separate projects can be integrated together to improve the town centre as a whole. This plan is accompanied by suggested land use changes, which inform the current District Plan Review, and a phasing plan, outlining implementation priorities. Preliminary Design Options have also been prepared to help visualise a range of possible outcomes of a few key projects around the 'heart' of the town centre. These focused on the Green Corridor ('The Green') and Baring Square.

The content and prioritisation of these design proposals have been refined following feedback provided during the community consultation.



Proposed Concept Plan



Indicative Land Use Plan

executive summary

Community Consultation

Stakeholders, such as landowners, occupiers and active interest groups, and the general public are essential parties in the process of successful implementation and have been consulted as part of the design process.

A range of local stakeholders attended the public open days with several Christchurch based stakeholders informed by way of individual presentations. All stakeholders were generally supportive of the Concept Plan proposals. Some technical issues were raised during the consultation, but these are more appropriately addressed during the implementation of the Concept Plan.

Following media releases, letter drops and two successful public open days, the project team collected useful responses to the Concept Plan proposals and a range of questions were asked through feedback forms. The main community's responses included:

- The existing issues with the town centre were considered to be the division of east and west parts of the town; the lack of car parking and traffic conflicts.
- To attract more locals and visitors to the town centre, the community identified the need for high quality spaces, good community facilities and a pedestrian friendly environment.
- Aspects they thought made Ashburton distinctive were The Domain, monuments, trees and gardens and Baring Square East (including the clock tower).
- Their priorities for investment focused on improving the civic space at Baring Square and creating a pedestrian friendly environment, such as traffic calming.
- Generally the community felt safe, although they indicated a focus should be placed on improving lighting and surveillance and upgrading laneways.

The public were asked to provide preferences for a range of concept options. The future growth option preferred by the project team 'The Integrated Core' was generally supported.

The key projects of Baring Square, the Green corridor and the laneways were seen as the top priorities when developing the town centre. There was also significant interest in connecting the town centre with the Domain.

Of those Preliminary Design Options presented, Option 3 widening the footpath on East Street, Option 3 developing Baring Square into one square, as the northern gateway to the town centre, and Option 1 providing a safe tree lined pedestrian crossing at the end of Burnett Street, were chosen as the preferred options.

Implementation

Once an overall Concept Plan is accepted, the Council can then proceed to design specific parts of the town centre in greater detail, where more technical issues can be resolved and implemented over time through its Community Plan. Where land use changes are proposed, the District Plan review process, currently running in parallel, can give effect to these changes through new zonings and development controls.



Proposed Implementation Plan

Key projects

1. Baring Square East
2. East Street and Town Green
3. 'Green Corridor'
4. Improve existing lanes and arcade
5. Cass Street gateways
6. Upgrade streets in core
7. Upgrade Victoria Street
8. Redevelop 'The Triangle' reserve
9. Domain entrance and connections
10. Baring Square West upgrade
11. Extend lanes network
12. Moore Street gateway
13. West Street upgrade
14. Mona Square upgrade
15. Complete Cass Street upgrade

Early Wins

16. Green gateways at town entrances
17. 4th Avenue planting
18. East Street walkways

Recommended Actions

Now that the Concept Plan has proceeded through community consultation and has the public's broad support for proposals to improve the town centre, we recommend the Council undertake the following actions to initiate its implementation:

- Town Centre Sub-committee to finalise and accept in principle the Ashburton Town Centre Concept Plan; subject to further detailed design, consultation and funding availability for the key projects proposed.
- Feed proposed land-use changes into the District Plan Review and consider appropriate zoning boundaries and planning controls to support the intent of the Concept Plan.
- Allow for professional fees and related implementation costs for higher priority projects during the Annual Plan and LTCCP budgeting process. This includes discussions with other Council managers on related capital works within the town centre.
- Begin planning and design work on one Key Project (e.g. Baring Square East) and appropriate 'early wins' projects (e.g. Signage), in consultation with the community.
- Carry out further work to effectively integrate or link significant community projects into the Concept Plan proposals.